

THE FISTICAL FOUR!

BY
OWEN CONQUEST



SCHOOLBOYS' OWN

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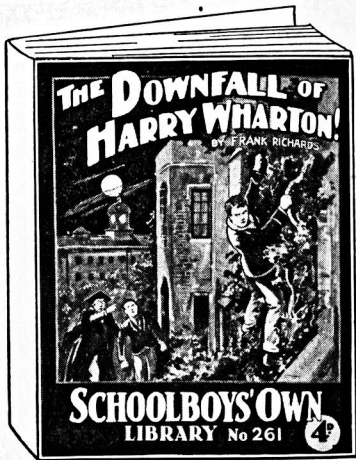
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The FISTICAL FOUR!

by Owen Conquest



A rousing long complete school story featuring JIMMY SILVER and Co., the fighting chums of Rookwood.

CHAPTER 1.

Jimmy Silver's Promise!

IT wasn't Jimmy Silver's fault. Neither was it Tommy Dodd's. It just happened.

When Jimmy Silver, captain of the Fourth Form at Rookwood, sat on the gate of the Head's garden he was thinking out the footer team for the forthcoming match with Bagshot. Nothing was further from his mind than a "scrap."

And when Tommy Dodd, of the Modern Side, came sauntering along with his hands in his pockets he was thinking out a financial problem which would have puzzled the Chancellor of the Exchequer—how to supply a study tea for three with the sum of three-pence-halfpenny!

But Classicals and Moderns seldom met at Rookwood without mutual chip-

ping. Tommy Dodd, as he caught sight of Jimmy Silver sitting on the gate, remarked cheerily:

"Hallo, Classical ass!"

To which Jimmy Silver rejoined:

"Hallo, Modern worm!"

It was then that it occurred to Tommy Dodd how extremely comic it would be to tilt up Jimmy Silver's feet and drop him over the gate into the Head's garden. That sacred garden being taboo to juniors added to the joke. Tommy Dodd, without wasting time, proceeded to carry out that excellent idea. He jumped forward and seized Jimmy Silver's ankles and lifted them.

"Over you go!" said Tommy Dodd.

But Jimmy Silver did not go over so easily as the Modern junior anticipated. His feet were in the air in the grasp of Tommy Dodd, so he could not jump down. But instead of going over back-

wards, he hurled himself forward, as if he were trying to shut himself up like a pocket-knife.

His weight being thus thrown on Tommy Dodd, that cheery youth went staggering back, and Jimmy Silver sprawled over him and brought him to the ground.

"Yow-ow-ow!" roared Dodd.

"Gerooh!" gasped Jimmy.

"You fathead! I'll wallop you!"

"You Modern duffer! I'll dust up the quad with you!"

"Yow! Take that!"

"Oh! Ah! Take that!"

That was how it began. It continued with vigour, the two juniors rolling over one another on the ground, punching and pommelling, with grievous damage to their Etons and collars.

It was then that Miss Dolly, the headmaster's daughter, looked over the gate from the garden.

Miss Dolly ejaculated:

"Goodness gracious!"

"Yah! You rotter!"

"Yah! You Classical chump!"

Punch, punch! Pommel, pommel! Thump, thump!

"Oh dear!" exclaimed Miss Dolly.

"Oh, you bad boys!"

The juniors heard her shocked and startled voice then, and they let go one another as suddenly as if both had become red-hot.

They sat up and blinked.

Tommy Dodd, with great presence of mind, executed a strategic retreat. He was up with a bound, and behind the beeches with another bound, devoutly hoping that Miss Dolly hadn't recognised him. For though it was according to all the rules—of the Fourth Form, at least—to punch some of the cheek out of a Classical bouncer, Miss Dolly, being a girl, might have looked upon him merely as a quarrelsome fellow with a taste for fighting. Which would really have been very unjust.

But Jimmy Silver's retreat was not so prompt. He was dabbing at his nose,

from which a crimson stream was flowing. His nose occupied him too long for him to think of escaping unrecognised.

"Jimmy Silver!" said Miss Dolly, in a tone of great severity.

Jimmy Silver blinked guiltily at Miss Dolly. His whole face became as crimson as his nose. He felt, like Tommy Dodd, that Miss Dolly wouldn't understand, being a girl. There was no harm whatever in knocking some of the cheek out of a Modern duffer, but Miss Dolly might very probably regard him as a regular hooligan.

"Ye-e-es?" he stammered.

"You were fighting."

"Not exactly fighting," said Jimmy Silver cautiously.

"Then what were you doing?"

"Well, I—I—"

"I am ashamed of you!"

Miss Dolly was really several months younger than Jimmy Silver, but she might have been twenty years older from the severity of her manner.

Jimmy grinned a little.

"I'm sorry!" he murmured meekly.

"I—I didn't know you were in the garden, Miss Dolly."

"You are always fighting!" said the headmaster's daughter severely. "Yesterday you punched Smythe of the Shell."

"Well, Smythe's rather a beast!" urged Jimmy.

Jimmy had punched Adolphus Smythe for giving a cigarette to a chap in Jimmy's own Form, but he did not feel that he could explain that to Miss Dolly.

"And the day before yesterday you were fighting with Cook."

"Well, Cook's only a Modern worm!" pleaded Jimmy. "We—we have to keep those Modern chaps rather in order, you know."

"And the other day you were sitting on Townsend. I saw you," said Miss Dolly. "You were rubbing his nose in the grass. Townsend isn't a Modern."

"He wouldn't come down to footer practice," said Jimmy defensively.

"I'm captain of the Fourth, you know. I can't allow slacking."

"And one day you were fighting with Flynn. Flynn isn't a Modern or a slacker."

Jimmy Silver made an effort of memory, trying to recall why he had been scrapping with Flynn of the Fourth. He was generally on the best of terms with Flynn.

"I shan't speak to you any more," announced Miss Dolly.

Jimmy Silver looked dismayed.

"I— Oh, I say—" he murmured feebly.

"Not unless you make me a promise," said Miss Dolly, relenting a little as she saw the effect of her crushing sentence.

"Anything you like, Miss Dolly," said Jimmy Silver eagerly. Jimmy was rather a favourite with the autocratic Miss Dolly, and he did not wish to forfeit that proud position. "I—I'll do anything! I—I say, would you like a white rabbit?"

"No, I wouldn't!" said Miss Dolly.

"Oh!" said Jimmy, crushed again.

"But I will let you make me a promise," said the girl generously.

"Anything you like!"

"That you will not fight anybody again for a whole week."

"Oh!"

"Look at your nose!" said Miss Dolly scornfully.

Jimmy Silver tried to look at his nose, very nearly becoming cross-eyed in the attempt.

"I was going to ask you to come and carry my parcels this afternoon," pursued Miss Dolly. "But I couldn't be seen with a nose like that!"

"But—but your nose isn't like that."

"I am speaking of your nose," said Miss Dolly, frowning, suspecting Jimmy Silver of an attempt at humour. "You had better go away and bathe it. I am ashamed of you!"

"But—"

"Oh, go away!"

"But I'll promise!" said Jimmy Silver recklessly. "I—I won't fight anybody

for a whole week! There! Whatever happens! There!"

Miss Dolly melted again.

"Honour bright?" she asked.

"Honour bright!" said Jimmy Silver solemnly.

"Then I will forgive you," said Miss Dolly considerably. "Now you can go and bathe your nose."

Miss Dolly flitted away, and Jimmy Silver took her excellent advice, and went to bathe his nose. His nose was somewhat painful, and it worried him. But it did not worry him so much, upon reflection, as the promise he had made to the headmaster's daughter.

Miss Dolly took a feminine view of matters. She did not understand the Fourth, and she was far from comprehending the necessity the Classical juniors were under of keeping the Modern bounders in their place. Jimmy Silver, as he bathed his nose, realised that he had let himself in for a very serious undertaking.

How on earth was that promise to be kept, considering—well, considering everything?

But Jimmy Silver was a slave to his word.

The promise had to be kept.

But the captain of the Fourth Form at Rookwood looked forward, with deep doubt and misgiving, to the week ahead.

CHAPTER 2.

The End Study is Surprised!

LOVELL and Raby and Newcome stared at Jimmy Silver, when he came into the end study to tea.

Jimmy Silver's nose was usually a good-looking nose. Its good looks had departed now. It was swollen in shape and crimson in hue.

"Where on earth did you pick up that danger-signal?" asked Lovell.

"Scrapping with a Modern worm," growled Jimmy Silver. "Does it show much?"

"Well, it could be seen about a mile off on a dark night, I should say."

"Oh, rats!"

"Never mind, if you licked the Modern," said Raby comfortingly. "We've been waiting tea for you. Pile in, old scout!"

"And we've got a scheme," said Newcome, as Jimmy Silver sat down to tea. Jimmy looked apprehensive.

That afternoon it had been agreed in the end study that the Moderns were getting their backs up in a way that couldn't possibly be allowed to continue. The time had plainly come for Tommy Dodd & Co. to be squashed. Jimmy Silver had concurred heartily.

Now there was a change. Apparently his promise to Miss Dolly was to be put to the test immediately.

"We've been jawing it over, while you've been collecting that nose," said Lovell. "It's a ripping wheeze!"

"Up against the Moderns, you know," said Newcome.

"We're going to give them the real kybosh this time," said Lovell emphatically. "Knock them right out of time, you know."

Jimmy Silver wriggled uneasily in his chair.

"I—I say——" he remarked haltingly. "Perhaps we've been a bit too much down on the Moderns."

"Eh?"

"On the whole, these scraps are a little—a little overdone. Suppose we try to keep at peace with the Modern worms for a bit—say a week."

"Off your rocker?" asked Raby politely.

"You see, we—if—that is, I mean that a girl would naturally be shocked by seeing fellows with swollen noses——"

"Well, we're not going to show our noses to a girl, after licking the Moderns, are we?" asked Lovell, in utter amazement.

"Nunno! But——"

"If you're being funny, Jimmy, chuck it, old chap. Now, my idea is this—it looks like more snow, and we're going

to have a regular snow battle with the Moderns, and wipe 'em off the earth. Isn't that a good wheeze?"

"Well, in a way. But——"

"But what?"

"It might lead to scrapping."

"Might!" grinned Raby. "Jolly sure to, I should think."

"Well, there you are, you see," said Jimmy Silver.

"I don't quite see," said Lovell.

"Why shouldn't we scrap with the Moderns? We always do!"

"Yes; but——"

"Has the Head been down on you?"

"The Head? No; but——"

"But what, fathead?"

"Nothing! Pass the cake!"

Jimmy Silver tucked into the cake, feeling decidedly uncomfortable. He felt that he could not confide to the end study the circumstances of his promise to Miss Dolly. He shrank from the general chortle which would have followed, and from having the matter become a standing joke in the Fourth Form.

But, without explaining, it was a little difficult to justify his remarkable new attitude to his chums.

"You can send a challenge to Tommy Dodd," resumed Lovell, after a curious stare at his study-leader. "If there's snow to-morrow, footer is off, and that will be a good chance for the snow-fight—see? We'll make the Moderns own up that we're top side of Rookwood this time."

"Next week——" began Jimmy.

"Bother next week. There won't be any snow next week."

"The fact is——"

"Well?"

"The—the fact is, I—I think it would lead to scrapping with the Modern chaps," said Jimmy lamely.

"I know it would. Don't you want to scrap with them?"

"Nunno!"

"Why not?" demanded Lovell, and Raby and Newcome in chorus.

"Because— Oh, because, you know, f—I think perhaps it would be better to—live in peace, like—like lambs, you know—"

"Lambs!" said Lovell, dazedly.

"Yes, like—like lambs, and—and treat the Moderns politely, and—and be very orderly and—and peaceful."

"Peaceful! Us!"

"Do the fellows call us the Fistical Four because we're peaceful?" demanded Raby.

"They'll call us the Funky Four if we follow Jimmy's fatheaded advice!" growled Lovell. "Are you off your rocker, Jimmy?"

"N-n-no!"

"Then what's the matter with you?"

"Something'll be the matter with you soon if you give us any more of that piffle," said Lovell darkly. "I'm fed up, for one. You're asking for a study licking. Now, are you going to write that challenge to Tommy Dodd?"

"Can't be did!"

"You won't?" roared Lovell.

"No!"

"Then I jolly well will!"

"You jolly well won't!" said Jimmy Silver warmly. "Who's leader of this study?"

"Bow-wow!"

"Look here, Lovell—"

"If you are beginning to funk the Moderns you won't be study-leader long," said Lovell. "I'm sending that challenge at once!"

"You won't!"

"I will!" roared Lovell.

It was mutiny in the end study. Jimmy Silver jumped up, and Lovell jumped up. Edward Arthur Lovell was very red and wrathful. He could not understand his chum in the least. Jimmy Silver was not quarrelsome, certainly; but he was by no means that most peculiar of all animals—a pacifist. As a rule, he was well to the fore in every raid and rag on the Moderns; it was really his keen enterprise in that direction which had caused him to be-

come leader and chief of the Classical juniors. His inexplicable backwardness now was exasperating.

Lovell shoved the tea-things aside, and dragged a sheet of impot paper towards him, and jabbed his pen into the ink.

"Go it!" said Raby.

Jimmy Silver jerked the impot paper away.

"Chuck it!" he said.

"Do you want a thick ear, Jimmy Silver?" bellowed Lovell.

"Go and eat coke!"

"Oh, bump him!" said Newcome.

"This must be one of his awfully deep jokes; and he wants a bumping!"

"Hear, hear!"

The Co. were puzzled, perplexed, and exasperated. Bumping Jimmy Silver seemed the easiest way of solving the difficulty.

The three juniors closed in on him, and Jimmy promptly put up his hands.

"Chuck it, you silly asses—"

"Collar him!" shouted Lovell.

Three pairs of hands were laid on Jimmy Silver.

The captain of the Fourth struggled furiously, and the three juniors fairly waltzed round him. A drive on the chest made Lovell sit on the hearthrug with a bump.

Then, all of a sudden, Jimmy Silver's struggles ceased. He stood unresisting in the grasp of the Co. He had remembered!

Honour bright!

"Oh, my hat!" groaned Jimmy.

"Bump him!" roared Lovell, scrambling up.

Bump, bump, bump!

Three times Jimmy Silver descended forcibly on the hearthrug. He yelled at each concussion. But he did not resist. In sheer amazement the Classical juniors released him, leaving him gasping on the rug.

"What's the matter with you?" shrieked Lovell.

"Groooh!"

"Are you dotty?"

"Bow-wow!"

"It must be a jape," said Raby wonderingly. "Either that, or he's gone off his rocker."

"Well, I'm sending that challenge, anyway," said Lovell, with a stare at the gasping Jimmy.

He jabbed a pen into the ink again, and started. Jimmy Silver picked himself up, and sat down to finish his tea. Lovell gave him a glare of defiance, but Jimmy Silver did not interfere again. He finished his tea quietly and sedately. His passiveness astounded the Co. What had come thus over the most warlike member of the Fistical Four they could not understand.

But there it was. After tea Jimmy Silver quietly left the study. Lovell and Raby and Newcome blinked at one another.

"What's the matter with him?" ejaculated Lovell.

Raby shook his head.

"Give it up. We know he ain't a funk, but he's acting just as if he was."

"Must be dotty!" said Newcome.

"Let's get that challenge to Tommy Dodd, anyway. Jimmy will have to join in the snow-fight."

And the challenge was duly written and dispatched by a Second Form fag to the Modern side.

CHAPTER 3.

Delightful for Adolphus!

JIMMY SILVER walked down the Fourth Form passage with a troubled brow. He was very far from easy in his mind. But his painful reflections were driven suddenly from his mind as he was passing Townsend's study.

The study door was closed, but from within there came, unmistakably, the scent of tobacco. And Jimmy Silver, as he stopped, heard the voice of Adolphus Smythe, the dandy of the Shell, the great leader of the estimable circle of merry blades known as the Giddy Goats.

"Give us a match, Towny."

Jimmy Silver's brow grew black.

That there was a good deal of slacking on the Classical side—much more than on the Modern side—was a fact which naturally irritated Jimmy Silver. Jimmy of the Fourth could not very well interfere with the Shell, and the Giddy Goats generally went on their way unregarded by him.

But when Smythe of the Shell led away Fourth Formers from the straight and narrow path, Jimmy felt called upon to chip in.

He was Captain of the Fourth, and it was up to him. Townsend and Topham, who shared that study, were slackers of the first water. Jimmy found it difficult to keep them up to any kind of footer practice. Smoking in the study or behind the chapel, hanging round Smythe & Co, and talking geegees, that kind of thing was more in their line. They were satellites of the great Adolphus, and basked in the sunshine of his regard.

The great Adolphus had evidently condescended to feed in Towny's and Topy's study that afternoon, and he was finishing, as usual, with a smoke.

Jimmy Silver turned the handle of the door and kicked it open.

There was an exclamation of alarm in the study.

Townsend jumped up and pitched his cigarette hastily into the fire; Topham dropped his under the table. Smythe of the Shell concealed his cigarette in the hollow of his hand.

But there was no concealing the atmosphere of smoke in the study.

"By gad!" gasped Townsend. "Jimmy Silver, you rotter! I—I thought it was Booties!"

"I—I thought it was Bulkeley!" stammered Topham. "What the thunder are you shoving into this study for, Jimmy Silver?"

Smythe of the Shell contented himself with a sneer, and with replacing his cigarette in his mouth.

Jimmy Silver frowned darkly at the three nuts.

"You sillin' young idiots!" he began. "You two duffers ought to have your heads knocked together. As for you, Smythe, I've spoken to you before about getting chaps in my Form to copy your fool tricks!"

"By gad!" yawned Adolphus over the cigarette.

Jimmy pointed to the door.

"Get out!" he said.

"Eh?"

"Clear off!"

"Look here, Jimmy Silver!" roared Townsend furiously. "We're not standin' this! Do you think you're goin' to order a guest out of my study?"

"Yes, rather, when he starts smoking there. Suppose it had been Bulkeley who'd dropped on you?"

"That's our bizney."

"Mine, too," said Jimmy Silver cheerfully. "I give you one minute to clear out, Smythey. If you don't go you'll be put."

"By gad!"

"Clear off yourself!" shouted Topham. "What do you mean by interferin' with us, you meddlin' cad?"

"Are you looking for a thick ear, Topy?" asked Jimmy Silver sweetly. "If you are, you've only to call your Uncle James names again. Are you going, Smythe?"

Adolphus Smythe rose to his feet. His eyes gleamed, and for once he was tempted to try conclusions with the captain of the Fourth. He resisted the temptation, however. Only too well the elegant dandy of the Shell knew that Jimmy Silver would have made hay of him in a very few minutes.

He glanced at Townsend and Topham with a sneering smile.

"So this is how you allow your guests to be treated?" he remarked. "You won't find me in this study again in a hurry!"

"Don't go, Smythey!"

"He'll go, or he'll be chucked!" said Jimmy Silver. "It's a rule that no

Shell fellow is allowed to play the giddy ox in a Fourth Form study."

"Who made that rule, you cheeky ass?"

"I did," said Jimmy calmly.

"Don't go, Smythey! There's three of us, and we'll chuck that interferin' cad out on his neck."

Smythe paused.

Three to one was long odds, and surely it seemed like an excellent opportunity for turning the tables upon Jimmy Silver.

"Tain't my bizney," said Smythe, "but I'm willin' to back up you fellows if you want to kick that meddlin' cad out."

"Go for him!" shouted Topham.

"Collar the cad!"

"I'm with you, dear boys!" said Adolphus.

The three nuts advanced upon Jimmy Silver in battle array.

Up went Jimmy's ready fists. He was not the chief of the Fistical Four for nothing. He would not have hesitated a single instant about taking on the three weedy slackers at once.

Nor was it a very dangerous attack. The trio had screwed up their courage to the sticking-point, but they all seemed to be trying to keep behind one another as they advanced upon Jimmy.

But Jimmy's hands dropped suddenly.

Again he had forgotten his promise to Miss Dolly, and again he had remembered it just in time.

With a deeply troubled face, the captain of the Fourth backed away.

"Hands off, you funky cads!" he growled savagely.

"Go for him!" chirruped Adolphus greatly encouraged by this unexpected and amazing retreat of the warlike Jimmy.

"Kick him out!" yelled Townsend.

"I—I'll talk to you about this next week," said Jimmy Silver. "I'll lick all three of you next week!"

"By gad, what a funk!" said

Smythe, in surprise and great delight.

"You sneakin' coward!"

"What!" yelled Jimmy.

"Sneakin' coward!" said Adolphus. "You came in here meddlin', and now you're goin' out on your neck! Collar him, dear boys!"

Jimmy Silver backed to the door, red with rage. The three nuts, their dubiousness quite vanished now, leaped upon him.

Jimmy Silver struggled in their grasp.

His fist was lashing out, but he stopped the blow. He was bound in honour not to fight. It was a terrible restriction—a really dismaying situation. But there it was.

"Out he goes!" chirped Adolphus.

Crash!

Jimmy Silver flew through the doorway, and bumped down in the passage.

"Ow!" he gasped.

A roar of laughter from the triumphant nuts followed him.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Exit Jimmy Silver!" chortled Adolphus.

"Don't you come meddlin' here again," said Townsend, wagging a forefinger at him. "We're not standin' any more of your rot, Jimmy Silver!"

Jimmy Silver sat up, crimson and panting. The crash in the passage had brought several fellows out of their studies. They stared at Jimmy Silver, and at the grinning nuts in the doorway, hardly able to believe their eyes. Jimmy Silver had been chucked out of Townsend's study, and he was taking it lying down—literally. It was amazing—incredible.

Oswald ran to help Jimmy up.

"Go for 'em, old son!" he said. "I'll back you up. Lend us a hand, Flynn! One to one is fair play!"

"Sure, and I'm ready!" said Flynn promptly. "Come on, Jimmy!"

Jimmy Silver stood and gasped.

"Hold on!" he stuttered. "It—it's all right! I'm not going to scrap—not now."

"Haven't you been chucked out of that study?" demanded Oswald.

"Ye-es-s!"

"And ain't you going for the cads?"

"No!"

"Well, my only hat!"

"Howly mother av Moses!"

Jimmy Silver, with a crimson face, turned away. A delighted cackle from Adolphus Smythe followed him.

"The blessed funk! Yah! Sneakin' coward!"

Jimmy Silver heard the taunt, but he heeded not. He walked down the passage without a word. There was a buzz of amazement mingled with contempt. Even Leggett, the funk of the Fourth, would not have taken that quietly. But Jimmy Silver had!

"Well, that beats the band!" said Jones minor. "What's the matter with Jimmy Silver? I never thought he was a funk!"

"He isn't," said Oswald quickly.

"Then why doesn't he go for Smythe?"

"He's afraid to, my infants," said Adolphus loftily. Adolphus was as surprised as any of the juniors by Jimmy's amazing attitude, but he was highly delighted. "The fact is, dear boys, we've all stood too much cheek from that kid Silver, and I'm goin' to see about keepin' him in his place after this. We'll finish that little smoke, Towny."

"Yaas, you bet!" said Towny.

The three "blades" resumed their laudable occupation, and cigarette-smoke filled the study again. This time there was no interference from the captain of the Fourth.

CHAPTER 4.

The Challenge Accepted!

"GIDDY challenge!" said Tommy Dodd.

"Let's look," remarked

Tommy Cook, putting down his tea-cup.

And Tommy Doyle suspended operations on a large cake.

The three Tommies had received the epistle from the Classical side. It was written upon a sheet of impot paper, in Edward Arthur Lovell's somewhat sprawling hand. It ran:

"NOTICE TO TOMMY DODD AND ALL MODERN CADS!

"The Classical side hereby challenge the Modern worms to a Snow Fight to-morrow (Wednesday) afternoon, if there is enouf snow. They promise them a thundering licking, and if they have the cheek to turn up, they undertake to lick them to the Wide, and make them sorry that they came along.

"(Signed) E. A. LOVELL,
"For the Classical Fourth."

The three Tommies chuckled gleefully over the missive.

"That's the kind of syntax you get on a mouldy old Classical side," Tommy Dodd remarked. "Anybody guess from this which is 'they' and which is 'them'?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if it isn't like one of those epoch-making speeches by a great statesman—you have to guess what it may possibly mean," remarked Tommy. "But, I suppose, being interpreted, it means that they're sending us a challenge to a snow-fight. Well, the snow's falling already, and there'll be plenty by to-morrow afternoon. There won't be any footer, so we may as well lick those Classical cads."

"Hear, hear!"

"Any answer?" asked the Second Form fag who had brought the note. He was waiting.

"Yes, rather," said Tommy Dodd. "You wait a minute, young Snooks. I'm going to write the answer."

"Buck up, then," said young Snooks. "Lovell's giving me a jam-tart for this, but I ain't going to waste time over it!"

"Dry up, you cheeky little worm!"

Tommy Dodd took a pen and a leaf from an exercise-book, and, with many chuckles, indited the following reply:

"TO THE CADS, WORMS, BOUNDERS, AND FREAKS OF THE CLASSICAL SIDE.

"Them having received the challenge of they, they and them will give them the licking of their lives. The Modern Side hope that they, them, those, these, other and which will all turn up.

"(Signed) TOMMY DODD,
"For the Modern Side."

The three Tommies roared over that excellent reply, and the fag was despatched with it.

Snooks of the Second returned whistling to the end study in the rival camp. The Fistical Four were all there, beginning their preparation. Snooks came in and pitched the letter on the table.

"Where's my tart?" he inquired.

"Is that Tommy Dodd's answer?" asked Lovell.

"Yes. Where's my tart?" demanded Snooks. "The Modern cads were cackling like anything over your letter, Lovell."

"Oh, were they?" said Lovell wrathfully.

"Yes; they thought the grammar was all wrong," said Snooks cheerfully, as he took his tart from the study cupboard. "I dare say it was. You chaps in the Fourth don't know much."

Snooks of the Second hurriedly retired with his tart after making that remark. If he had lingered he would have been in peril of taking a thick ear back with him to the lair of the Second.

Jimmy Silver grinned, and Lovell frowned. He opened the letter, and stared as he read it.

"Well, my hat!" ejaculated Lovell. "Talk about grammar. Look at that!"

The Classical chums looked at it, and burst into a roar.

"If that's their Modern grammar, give me Classical," said Lovell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cackling at, you duffers?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here——" bawled Lovell.

"I'm afraid he's pulling your leg a bit!" chuckled Raby. "Never mind; they accept the challenge, and we're going to lick them to-morrow!"

"We're jolly well going to lick them, that's a cert!" grunted Lovell. "You'd better pass the word round to the fellows, Jimmy."

"You'd better do that," said Jimmy uneasily. "I can't!"

"Ain't you skipper?"

"I leave it to you for to-morrow."

"Well, that's all right," agreed Lovell. "I dare say I shall handle it better than you would. But you'll have to back me up."

"Sorry! I—I—I——"

"I—I—I——" mimicked Lovell. "I suppose you're not going to funk a scrap with the Moderns, Jimmy Silver?"

"Nunno; but——"

"Blow your butts! I suppose you want to stand out of it!" exclaimed Raby.

"Yes."

"Wha-a-t!"

"I—I'm going out on my bike to-morrow afternoon——"

"On your bike—in six inches of snow!" yelled Newcome.

"Ahem! Well, no; not on my bike. I—I'm going for a walk."

The Fistical Three stared at their leader, dumbfounded.

"You—you're going out just to get out of a scrap with the Moderns!" Lovell managed to articulate at last.

Jimmy Silver crimsoned, but he did not reply. The three exchanged glances, and wrath mingled with scorn in their faces. Jimmy Silver groaned inwardly.

His fatal promise lay like lead upon

his heart. He was taking the only possible course, in the circumstances. But the chums were bound to misunderstand.

It was upon his lips to tell them of the promise he had made to Miss Dolly. But he did not utter it. Only too keenly he realised the ridicule that would follow. For a fellow to be tied to a girl's apron-strings was too ridiculous; he knew that he would never hear the end of it. He felt that Miss Dolly had been very hard on him. But there was no help for it now. It was hard, however, to "keep smiling," when his chums were looking at him as they were looking at him now.

There was a long silence in the study. Lovell turned to his preparation again without a word. The look on his face was sufficient to express his thoughts.

Raby blinked at Jimmy Silver, and then began to work. Only Newcome addressed a word to the unfortunate chief of the end study.

"Jimmy, old man, are you trying to pull our leg?"

"No."

"Are you really going out to-morrow afternoon?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"Oh, just because—because——" Jimmy Silver shrugged his shoulders irritably. "Never mind why. I'm not a funk, you silly asses! But—but I'm not going to scrap with the Moderns."

Lovell looked up grimly.

"I've heard that Smythe kicked you out of Towny's study," he said. "I suppose that's true?"

Jimmy did not answer.

"Well, Jimmy Silver, if you want my opinion——"

"I don't!"

"You can have it, all the same. You're either a silly fool or a howling, rotten funk, and I'm fed-up with you. Keep out of the scrap, if you want to—I shan't ask you again. But all the fellows will know what you're keeping

out for, and you know what they'll think."

Jimmy Silver knew only too well. But he made no reply; and preparation was resumed in the end study—in grim and gloomy silence. The cheery harmony in that celebrated study seemed to be gone for good.

CHAPTER 8.
The Snow-fight.

"**R**IPPING!" said Lovell, as the juniors came out after morning lessons on the following day.

It was really ripping, from the point of view of the juniors, who were looking forward to the snow-fight.

The quadrangle was a sheet of white, and snow gleamed on every wall and ledge and window. Keen, frosty sunshine gleamed on the snow.

Nearly all the Classical Fourth, and many of the Third and the Shell, were merrily anticipating the battle. Jimmy Silver's face alone was clouded.

No one would have enjoyed the exciting snow-battle more thoroughly than Jimmy Silver. The keen, sunny, frosty afternoon seemed specially designed for it. And it was probably the last good snowfall of the season, too. The opportunity, if lost, would not recur.

Jimmy debated seriously in his mind during dinner.

He had promised the autocratic Miss Dolly not to fight anybody again for a week. Honour Bright bound him in unbreakable bonds. But a snow-battle scarcely came within the category of "fights"—so long as it did not develop into fisticuffs. Fisticuffs were barred, but not snowballing. Only it was extremely probable that when snowballs gave out, the rivals of Rookwood would betake themselves to fists and twisted caps, and then—

Then Jimmy Silver would have to "chuck" it.

Lovell grunted at him as they came out after dinner. Lovell was looking sour.

"Are you coming with us, or are you funkling?" he asked.

Jimmy Silver made up his mind.

"I'll come—so long as it's only snowballing. But I'm not going to fight anybody."

"Why not?" shrieked Lovell.

"Oh, because—"

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

The Classicals marched out in battle array, with the Fistical Four at their head. Adolphus Smythe and his cronies watched them with supercilious smiles. Snowfighting—or, indeed, any healthy open-air exertion of any kind—was not in the line of Adolphus & Co.

The Classicals set to work heartily.

Behind the frozen, leafless old beeches the snow fort was erected, big blocks of snow jammed together in great style. The breastwork was piled high, and inside the fortifications piles of snowballs were prepared. Lovell & Co. did not mean to run short of ammunition.

Jimmy Silver helped heartily in that work. At three o'clock the attack was to come. The Classicals were to hold the fort, and the Moderns were to attack. Owing to the "slackers" standing out on the Classical side, the odds were on the side of the Moderns. But the fortifications were strong and well supplied with ammunition, and the Classicals had no doubt whatever about being able to hold their own.

As three chimed out from the clock-tower on the Modern side, Tommy Dodd & Co. appeared, in imposing array.

Tommy Dodd was armed with the bugle he used on paper chases, and he called his men together with stirring blasts.

"Ta-ta-ra-ra-ta-ra!"

"Here they come!" said Lovell. "Mind, they're not to get into the fort. If they get our flag down we're beaten. Straight from the shoulder, you know."

"You bet!"

"All hands repel boarders!" grinned Raby.

The Moderns advanced to the attack in four separate parties, to attack all four sides of the fort at once. Thus Tommy Dodd, who was a skilled general, had directed. The three Tommies and Towle led the four parties from the four quarters. Over the heads of the waiting Classics the flag blew out on the breeze.

"Ta-ra-ra-ra!"

The bugle blew the signal for the assault.

From all sides came the rush of the warlike Moderns, with armfuls of snowballs and a heavy, concentrated fire.

"Back up!" roared Jimmy Silver.

"Go it, Classics!"

From the snow walls of the fort snowballs flew in thick volleys. The rushing Moderns met a storm of missiles. From behind the cover of the fortifications the Classics pelted them mercilessly.

Whiz! Whiz! Squash! Crash! Bash! Howl!

The fun waxed fast and furious.

Back went the Moderns, blinded by squashing snowballs, bowled over by the rain of squashy missiles. On all sides of the fort they sprawled in the snow and gasped and roared.

Three of the attacking parties, hopelessly defeated, surged and sprawled away. But on the other side Tommy Dodd came gallantly up to the breastwork, backed by Lacy and Webb, and gained a footing. The Moderns behind him rallied at his yell, and rushed after him. Moderns driven off on the other sides came racing round to join the successful storming-party.

Snowballs filled the air, but the Moderns came on. Tommy Dodd & Co. were too close now for snowballs to be much use, and the ammunition, ample as it was, was giving out.

It was hand-to-hand now.

Lovell grasped Tommy Dodd as the

Modern chief sprawled over the snow wall, and strove to hurl him back. But Tommy Dodd was not to be hurled. He clung to Lovell, and they rolled over together—inside the fort.

"Back up!" shrieked Lovell breathlessly.

"Pile in, Moderns!"

"Hurrah!"

All the garrison were crowding to the threatened spot, and it looked as if the attack, close as it was, would be driven back. But there was a yell from the other side, and Tommy Doyle and a crowd of juniors came swarming over the undefended wall.

They were inside the fort on its neglected side before the Classics could get back and man the walls.

"Pile in, ye spalpeens!" roared Tommy Doyle.

"Hurrah! Down with the Classical worms!"

"Back up!" yelled Jimmy Silver.

On all sides the Moderns were swarming in now, and numbers began to tell. Lovell was collared and dumped in the snow, and Tommy Dodd sprang up and made a rush for the flagstaff. As he laid his hand on it to drag down the Classical colours Jimmy Silver dashed up and grabbed him by the shoulder.

Tommy Dodd spun round in Jimmy's grasp.

He put up his hands with a chuckle.

"Here's for your nose, you Classical ass!"

"Hold on!" gasped Jimmy.

"Eh? Why, I'll—"

Jimmy Silver backed away. His face was crimson—but he backed. Snowballing was over, and it had come to fisticuffs, as he had anticipated. But he could not fight Tommy Dodd.

Tommy Dodd was astounded. He had expected a terrific tussle for the flag. But as Jimmy backed away, Dodd laughed, and turned to the flagstaff again. With a wrench, he tore it out of the ground, and the Classical colours came fluttering down.

There was a roar of triumph from the Moderns.

"Funk!" yelled Flynn, shaking his fist at Jimmy Silver. Flynn was sitting on Tommy Cook, and was very busy.

Jimmy did not reply.

The fight was nearly over now. The Classics missed the strong arm of Jimmy Silver in the final tussle, and the odds were too great. They were pitched headlong out of the fort, and the remainder of their own pile of snowballs whizzed after them.

Up went the flagstaff again, with a Modern cap floating at the top.

Cheer upon cheer burst from the Modern juniors. The fort was captured, the Moderns had triumphed. And the Classics, with feelings too deep for words, had to leave the victorious enemy in possession of the fort.

CHAPTER 6.
Hard Cheese.

"**FUNK!**" That unpleasant word, in a regular howl, greeted Jimmy Silver in the Fourth Form passage a little later.

"Funk!"

"Worm!"

The Classical Fourth could hardly think of epithets severe enough for Jimmy Silver.

A dozen pairs of eyes had seen him back down before Tommy Dodd at the critical moment. The general opinion was that if Jimmy Silver had backed up, as he ought to have done, the battle would have been won. But the flag had been hauled down, and that settled it—all through Jimmy Silver.

Flynn shook his knuckles under Jimmy's nose in the Fourth Form passage. Lovell and Raby and Newcome had not a word to say for their chum.

Jimmy's face was scarlet. He

could not explain; and, indeed, if he had told the facts, his explanation would have been regarded as an excuse forfunking.

"Funk!" roared Flynn. "Ain't ye ashamed to show your face, Jimmy Silver?"

"Oh, rats!" growled Jimmy.

"What's come over you, Jimmy?" exclaimed Oswald. "You used not to be a funk."

"So you think I'm a funk, too!" growled Jimmy.

"Well, what's a fellow to think?"

"You're afraid of a Modern cad!" howled Flynn. "You didn't stand up to Tommy Dodd! Well, you can stand up to me! Put your paws up, funk!"

Jimmy backed away.

"Hold on! I'm not going to fight you, Flynn!"

"Faith and ye are!" said Flynn grimly. "And that's for a start!"

"That" was a dab on Jimmy Silver's nose, and the captain of the Fourth staggered back. Without stopping to think, he let out his left, and Flynn rolled on the floor of the passage with a roar.

"Yaroo!"

"Well hit!" grinned Lovell.

But Jimmy Silver stood conscience-stricken. He was fighting, after his promise!

He jammed his hands hard into his pockets.

"I'm sorry, Flynn," he said awkwardly. "I—I didn't mean to hit you! I forgot!"

Flynn scrambled up.

"Sure, I'll make you sorrier, ye spalpeen!"

He rushed to the attack. His right and left knocked upon Jimmy's crimsont countenance.

Jimmy Silver's hands remained in his pockets. He did not make the slightest motion to defend himself.

The juniors gazed on in amazement.

Flynn dropped his hands.

"Put up your paws!" he bawled.

"I won't!"

Jimmy's face had turned pale now, but he was quite calm.

"You—you won't put up your hands?" stuttered Flynn, taken quite aback.

"No!"

"Is it dotty ye are?"

"Are you finished?" asked Jimmy grimly.

"Sure, I won't hit a chap who won't hit back!" said Flynn contemptuously, stepping back. "Ye're a rotten funk, and that's what ye are, Jimmy Silver!"

"By gad!" the drawing voice of Adolphus Smythe chimed in. "Did you ever see such a funk, dear boys? A disgrace to the side, I call it!"

Jimmy Silver moved away down the passage, but the elegant figure of Smythe, of the Shell stepped in the way.

"Stop!" he commanded.

Jimmy Silver stopped. He could not go on without knocking Adolphus Smythe out of the way, and that was impossible in the circumstances, though easy enough in any other circumstances.

Adolphus smiled.

More than once he had felt the weight of Jimmy Silver's arm, and now his time had come. That sudden and amusing attack of "funk" had placed his old enemy at his mercy.

And Adolphus was not merciful to a fallen enemy.

"You're a funk'in' cad, Jimmy Silver!" he said.

"Let me pass!"

"Not yet," said Adolphus. "You're a meddlin', interferin' rotter, and I'm goin' to pull your ear!"

The Classical Fourth looked on, breathless. Would Jimmy Silver stand that from the dandy of the Shell? It was impossible—unbelievable! Smythe stretched out a hand—a little nervously, as a matter of fact—and seized Jimmy Silver's ear between his finger and thumb.

"Jimmy!" gasped Lovell.

The chums of the end study were red with humiliation. Jimmy Silver's

pale face flushed crimson, but he did not withdraw his hands from his pockets.

Smythe pulled his ear.

There was a general gasp as Jimmy, when Smythe released his ear, walked away without a word.

"By gad!" chortled Adolphus. "What a rotten funk! Yarooop!"

Lovell's fist smote Adolphus fairly on the nose, and he went heels over head along the passage.

Adolphus landed with a crash. Lovell walked away with Raby and Newcome. But they did not follow Jimmy Silver. They were ashamed of their chum; and Jimmy, as he went out miserably into the snowy quadrangle, was ashamed of himself. Yet he had no cause for shame. He had made a reckless promise and he was keeping it, as he was in honour bound to do.

CHAPTER 7.

Miss Dolly is Sorry!

"JIMMY, what's the matter?"

Jimmy Silver was leaning on the gate of the Head's garden, as the dusk deepened over Rookwood School. He was feeling utterly dejected.

He had tasted the very dregs of the cup of humiliation.

Smythe of the Shell—the funky, lazy, lackadaisical Adolphus—had pulled his ear in public, and he had taken it without resentment.

His chums avoided him. If they looked at him, it was with scorn in their looks. His name was a byword in the Form of which he had been the leader.

And only two days of that terrible week had elapsed. What was to happen in the other five—bullying from mean fellows whom he had always despised, ragging, scorn, contempt, avoidance?

Even Leggett would wipe out old scores by licking him, now that it was safe. Townsend and Topham would

cuff him; Smythe would pull his ears. He writhed with shame as he contemplated the near future.

True, when that awful week had elapsed, he would be able to wipe out the stain; he would have more fights on his hands than he had had during his whole career at Rockwood; but—

His ear was still burning from the grip of Smythe's fingers. It seemed to scorch him like a hot iron. He groaned aloud in his miserable dejection. Miss Dolly didn't know the harm she had done!

A soft voice from the other side of the gate startled him from his glum reverie.

He started and looked round. Miss Dolly was gazing at him over the gate, with concern in her pretty face.

"Are you ill, Jimmy?" she asked.

"Nunno."

"Then what's the matter?"

"N-no-nothing."

"You're looking awfully miserable," said Miss Dolly, inspecting him.

"I—I feel rather rotten, Miss Dolly."

"Have you been fighting again?" exclaimed the young lady severely.

Jimmy Silver groaned dismally.

"Of course I haven't! Didn't I promise you I wouldn't?"

"Did you?"

Jimmy Silver jumped.

"Did I?" he gasped. "Don't you remember?"

"Yes, I remember now," said Miss Dolly placidly. "I had forgotten."

"Forgotten!" Jimmy Silver felt almost dazed. "Forgotten! My hat! Well, I haven't had a chance to forget, Miss Dolly!"

"But what's the matter?"

"Forgotten!" said Jimmy, with growing indignation. "And I'm called a funk, and despised by every chap in the school—kicked out of a study, punched on the nose, had my ear pulled by a funky cad—all because I made you that promise, and you've forgotten!"

"I'm so sorry, Jimmy," said Miss

Dolly softly. "Of course, I—I knew you would keep that promise. But what's the matter with your nose?"

"Knuckles," said Jimmy grimly.

"And—and your ear?"

"Pulled."

"Then you have been fighting, after all?"

"No, I haven't! I've been bullied and ragged and kicked, and made to look a cowardly worm!" groaned Jimmy Silver. "I—I didn't hit back, you see—only once when I forgot!"

Miss Dolly was silent for a few moments, and then her face dimpled.

"Why, you're laughing!" ejaculated Jimmy Silver. "It isn't a laughing matter for me, I can tell you, Miss Dolly!"

"I'm so sorry, Jimmy. I—I wish I hadn't made you make that promise," said Miss Dolly kindly. "I did not think this would happen. It was very hard on you, Jimmy. I'm really sorry. And I release you from the promise, too!"

"Do you mean that, Miss Dolly? I'll stick it out for a week if you like!"

"No—no! It was a mistake, and I don't want you to. Has a bad boy really pulled your poor ear, Jimmy?" asked Miss Dolly sympathetically.

"Looks like it, doesn't it?" mumbled Jimmy.

"And you didn't punch him because you had promised?"

"Yes."

"He must have been a coward, Jimmy, to do such a thing. Will you make me another promise?"

"Tell me what it is first," said Jimmy Silver cautiously.

Miss Dolly smiled.

"Promise me to punch that bad boy's head, but—but not too hard!"

"What-ho!"

Miss Dolly hurried away. Jimmy Silver grinned. That dreadful promise which had weighed upon him like a nightmare for two days was rescinded now—it was replaced by another promise which it would be perfectly delightful to carry out.

Jimmy Silver whistled cheerily as he walked to the School House. There was a surprise in store for the Classical Fourth.

CHAPTER 8.

Jimmy on the Warpath!

"HERE he comes!"

"Classical funk!" said Tommy Dodd. "Oh, cheese it!" said Tommy Dodd. "Let the poor beast alone! He can't help being a funk!" The group of Modern juniors grinned. Jimmy Silver came up to them sedately.

"Anybody here call me a funk?" he inquired, in polite tones.

"Well, if you put it like that, I do!" said Tommy Dodd warmly.

His hands went up as he spoke, and they were needed. Jimmy Silver was rushing at him.

"A fight!" yelled Lovell.

There was a ring round the two combatants at once. Jimmy Silver was going it. But Tommy Dodd was a redoubtable antagonist, and it was a terrific scrap.

How that terrific encounter would have ended cannot be said, for Bulkeley of the Sixth bore down upon the scene.

"Cave!" yelled Raby.

The two combatants separated, and retreated in different directions. The captain of Rookwood arrived upon the spot, but the juniors were gone.

Bulkeley grinned and walked away. When he was gone, Lovell and Raby and Newcome reappeared from behind the beeches, and Lovell and Raby had linked arms with Jimmy Silver. The Fistical Four were on the best of terms again.

"Come in to tea, Jimmy," said Lovell affectionately. "I—I knew you weren't a funk, you know. But what the merry dickens were you playing that idiotic game for?"

"It was a promise!" growled Jimmy Silver. "But it's all over now, and

don't ask any questions! I want to see Flynn."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Fistical Four entered the School House, and Flynn was encountered on the upper landing. He grinned scornfully at the sight of Jimmy Silver.

"You called me a funk, Flynn, old chap!" said Jimmy Silver cheerily.

"Faith, and so ye are— Oh, my hat!"

For five minutes there was a terrific tussle on the landing. The Classical Fourth came round in a crowd to watch.

At the end of the fifth minute Flynn confessed that he had had enough. He certainly looked as if he had had a little too much.

"Shure, and phwat's the matter wid ye, intoirely?" he mumbled, as he dabbed his damaged nose. "Pulling our leg, ye baste? Groooogh!"

"Give us your fin, old scout," said Jimmy Silver, "and come along with me! I've got to see Smythe!"

Flynn grinned.

"Faith I'll come wid pleasure!"

Half the Classical Fourth marched with the Fistical Four to Smythe's study, in the Shell corridor.

Jimmy Silver kicked the door open and stalked in. Smythe and Tracy and Howard were at tea. They burst into a merry chortle at the sight of Jimmy Silver.

"Here's the funk!" said Adolphus. "Have you come here to have your ear pulled again, Jimmy Silver?"

"Exactly!" said Jimmy Silver calmly. "Here it is!"

He bent his head towards Adolphus, while the Fourth Formers, crowding outside the doorway, chuckled.

Adolphus looked surprised. He did not quite like the look in Jimmy Silver's eyes.

"Pull his ear, and kick him out!" said Tracy.

"Yaas, begad, if he doesn't go!" said Adolphus uneasily. "Get out while you're safe, Silver, you cheeky young cad!"

"Are you going to let me off, Smythey?" asked Jimmy.

"Yaas, I'm lettin' you off this time!"

"Thanks! But I'm not letting you off!" smiled Jimmy.

"Look here—— Leggo! Hands off, you beast!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The table rocked as Jimmy Silver and Adolphus Smythe bumped into it, struggling. Howard and Tracy jumped up and retreated to the wall. Adolphus did not struggle long. The amazing funkiness on which he had relied had vanished, and Jimmy Silver was his old self again.

"Leggo!" moaned Adolphus. "I've had enough! Wow-ow-w-ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jimmy Silver fixed his finger and thumb upon Adolphus' prominent nose.

"Had enough?" he inquired politely.

"Wow-wow!"

The grip on Adolphus' nose tightened like a vice.

"Are you sorry?"

"Yow-ow! Yaas! Led go!"

Jimmy Silver let go at last, and Adolphus sank into a chair, clasping his nose with both hands, in deep anguish.

Jimmy Silver sauntered from the study, amid the loud laughter of the Classical Fourth. The reputation of the leader of the Fistical Four was fully re-established.

There was a merry feed in the end study. Lovell and Raby and Newcome were all grins, and Jimmy Silver was looking his old self again; and Flynn, with a darkened eye and a damaged nose, was an honoured guest. The clouds had rolled by, and once more Uncle James was monarch of all he surveyed.

CHAPTER 9.

Simply Awful!

"COMIN' to the meetin'?"

Townsend of the Fourth put his head into the end study to ask that question.

It was not often that Townsend, the slacker and dandy of the Fourth, visited the end study. Jimmy Silver & Co., to whom that celebrated apartment belonged, had no use for slackers.

But Townsend was in a state of great excitement now. Evidently something unusual was "on."

Jimmy Silver looked up from the lines he was doing for Mr. Bootles. Lovell looked round from the grate, where he was baking chestnuts. Raby and Newcome were playing chess, and they did not condescend to look up at all.

"Meeting?" repeated Jimmy Silver.

"Yes, meetin' of the Form."

Jimmy Silver gave Townsend a freezing glare.

"Meeting of the Form, you cheeky ass! Who's captain of the Fourth Form at Rookwood?" he demanded.

"Who's had the blessed cheek to call a meeting of the Form without consulting me?"

"Let him die the death!" grinned Lovell.

"Oh, rats!" said Townsend.

Jimmy Silver laid down his pen, rose to his feet, and pushed back his cuffs.

"Did you say 'Rats!' to me, Townsend?" he asked politely.

"Look here——"

"Which side of your face would you prefer your nose to be shifted to?" asked Jimmy Silver, still with great politeness.

Townsend backed through the doorway. Townsend had a cultivated taste in neckties, and a skilled eye to the fit of a waistcoat, but he was not a fighting man.

"Oh, don't be an ass!" he said. "I haven't come here to row with you. Smythe advised us to hold a Form meetin'."

"Tell Smythe to go and eat coke!"

"He said he wouldn't stand it if the new cad was comin' into the Shell," said Townsend, "so I don't see why we should stand it in the Fourth. Look

here, you ought to come to the meetin', as Form captain!"

"It won't be a meeting unless I come," said Jimmy Silver loftily. "Merely a crowd of fags, not a meetin'!"

"Well, come, then."

"I don't approve of Form meetings being called in this unprecedented way," said Jimmy Silver coldly. "Go and eat coke!"

"But it's an important matter!" howled Townsend.

"What's the row about?" asked Lovell.

"Haven't you heard the news?"

"What news?"

"Then you haven't heard," said Townsend. "I can tell you, it's sickenin'! I don't know what Rookwood's comin' to, don't you know! Topham says he's thinkin' of askin' his people to take him away!"

"I didn't know Topham was a public benefactor like that," said Jimmy Silver. "Tell him I wish him luck!"

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said Townsend. "This ain't a time for bein' funny! Look here, you fellows ought to come and back us up. We'll back you up if you like. It's a question whether Rookwood's goin' to be disgraced or not!"

"My hat! What on earth's the matter?"

"There's a new fellow coming——"

"Well, that has happened before, hasn't it? Sometimes it's a jolly good thing for a school. I was a new fellow once, you know!"

"I tell you I don't want any of your funny jaw!" howled Townsend. "This new fellow is the limit—past the limit!"

"Not a cannibal?"

"No; worse, if possible!"

"My word! He must be a corker, then!" said Raby, looking up from the chess at last. "Do you know him, Towny?"

"Know him!" Townsend looked horror-stricken at the suggestion. "Know him! Do you think I'd know

such a blackguard? The question's insultin'!"

"How do you know he's such an outsider if you don't know him?" asked Jimmy Silver.

"Oh, I know all about him!" said Townsend. "We've heard it from Bootles. I fancy Bootles guessed there might be trouble. He said the new kid would be in my study, as there's only two of us there—Topy and me. In my study, you know! The awful beast! I know I'll smash him—at least, I won't share a study with him! It's sickenin'—revoltin', in fact!"

Townsend was evidently in a state of great wrath; he almost forgot to drop his "g's."

"Hard lines if he's put into your study with you and Topham!" said Newcome.

"Yes, ain't it?"

"I mean for him!"

"Oh, don't be a silly idiot, Newcome! I tell you fellows we're not standin' it, and we're holdin' a Form-meetin' on the subject!"

"But you haven't told us yet what's the matter with the new kid!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver. "If he isn't a convict, what has he done?"

"He's shoved himself in here on a Founders' Scholarship!"

"Well, there are several chaps here on Founders' Scholarships," said Jimmy Silver. "They're all right, aren't they? Has it put your aristocratic back up because the kid won't be paying fees?"

"That's not it—that doesn't matter. The Founders' Scholarships are all right, so long as they're handed out to decent chaps—sons of retired Army men and Naval officers, and that sort. But this chap is a scrubby scoundrel!"

"Oh, dear!"

"A filthy outsider! I'll tell you what I've heard about him," said Townsend, his voice thrilling with indignation. "His father works for his living!"

Jimmy Silver staggered against the table, apparently overcome with horror.

"Good heavens!" he gasped.

"Look here——"

"You don't really say so!"

"I do, I tell you!"

"Help!" moaned Jimmy faintly. "Anybody got any smelling-salts? Pat me on the back, Lovell, there's a good chap! I feel faint! A—a—a chap whose father works for his living is coming to Rookwood! Alas! Alas, alackaday!"

"You silly ass!" roared Townsend. "There's nothing to be funny about! I tell you this chap's father is a carpenter!"

"Awful!" agreed Jimmy Silver. "Couldn't he be induced to give up carpentering and take to loafing about? Then it would be all right."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Or he might take to burgling, or highway robbery, or go on the Stock Exchange," said Jimmy Silver. "I dare say it's never been pointed out to him what an awful thing it is to do honest work!"

Townsend snorted.

"If that means that you are going to back up the cad, you'll be booked for a high old time, I can tell you that, Jimmy Silver!" he shouted. "I can tell you that we're all down on the rotter! We're holdin' a Form-meetin' to decide what's goin' to be done. We're not standin' it!"

Jimmy Silver sat down, and resumed writing his lines.

"Are you comin' to the meetin', or are you not comin' to the meetin'?" demanded the dandy of the Fourth.

"Not!"

"Well, we can hold the meetin' without you, and we're goin' to arrange to give that cad a reception when he comes!" said Townsend. "We'll make Rookwood too hot to hold him, I can tell you that! The scrubby beast, shovin' himself in among gentlemen!"

"Didn't you say he was going into your study?"

"Yes."

"Then he certainly won't be among gentlemen. Nothing to be alarmed about, dear boy!"

Townsend did not reply. He retired from the study, and slammed the door with a terrific slam. It was evident that he was not to expect any support from the Fistical Four. Jimmy Silver calmly went on writing his lines.

CHAPTER 10.

Jimmy Silver Has a Few Words to Say!

"THAT job's done!"

Jimmy Silver laid down his pen with a sigh of relief. Fifty lines of P. Vergilius Maro had been duly transcribed for the benefit of Mr. Bootles, the master of the Fourth.

"If you duffers have done chess, we'll have tea," remarked Lovell.

"I've been thinking," said Jimmy Silver. "It's like those fags' cheek to hold a Form-meeting without our special orders! Perhaps we may as well drop in, after all!"

"Oh, blow their silly meeting!" said Raby. "I'm hungry. We'll finish this game presently, Newcome!"

"Then there's the new chap," said Jimmy Silver thoughtfully.

"Bother the new chap! We don't know him!"

"We shall know him when he comes, I suppose. He's going to be a Classical, or he wouldn't be put in Towny's study."

"Might as well have put him on the Modern side if he's the kind of rotter Towny seems to think."

"But perhaps he isn't."

"Perhaps. Let's have tea."

"Let's give the meeting a look-in first," said Jimmy Silver. "I've got a few words to say to those cheerful idiots."

Lovell looked a little alarmed.

Jimmy Silver's peculiarities were well known to his chums. He was the champion of lost causes, so to speak. When a fellow was down Jimmy would make it his business to back him up, regardless of consequences. That trait in Jimmy's character had often brought the end study into hot water.

It was all very well of Jimmy to be the champion of the oppressed, so to speak, but Lovell's idea was that there ought to be a limit.

"Look here, Jimmy," he began, "I can see what you mean in your eye. You've got to draw it mild."

"Come on!" said Jimmy.

"You don't even know the chap. And he may be all that Towny says!" exclaimed Lovell warmly. "If he's a rank outsider you're not going to pal with him."

"Well, I don't generally pal with rank outsiders—unless you're alluding to this study," said Jimmy blandly.

"Oh, don't be an ass! I've got nothing against the new kid, but we're not going to get into a lot of fresh rows about him. Let him rip."

"My dear chap, he may turn out a very valuable acquaintance," said Jimmy seriously. "If his father's a carpenter he may be able to show us how to mend the leg of that table. We've all tried our hand at it, and it gets worse every time."

"Look here, Jimmy——"

"Let's go to the merry meeting," urged Jimmy. "I want to see Towny and Topsy in a state of bubbling indignation. It will be funny."

Jimmy Silver walked out of the study, and the Co. followed. They generally did follow when Jimmy Silver led.

The Fistical Four descended to the Common-room.

There was a buzz of voices in that apartment as the chums of the Fourth entered. Nearly all the Classical Fourth were there, as well as some of the Moderns. For once they were not rowing, however. Townsend was mounted on a chair, addressing the meeting in tones of thrilling indignation. The audience did not seem wholly to agree with Towny. Flynn's voice could be heard suggesting that the poor "baste" should be given a chance. Oswald was remarking that Towny was a silly ass Jones minor was declaring that it was time for tea, and that he was fed-up with Towny's rot.

But the majority seemed to agree with the speaker. His remarks were punctuated with "Hear, hears!"

"I put it to the Form," said Townsend "I appeal to every gentleman present. Is this horrid bounder Rawson, from the slums—perhaps from the workhouse—a fit person to come to Rookwood?"

"No!"

"The Head ought never to have admitted his claim to the scholarship. The Founders' Scholarships weren't intended for his sort."

"Hear, hear!"

"Hold on!" said Jimmy Silver.

"I don't want any rotten jaw from you, Jimmy Silver!"

"You're going to get it, and if you interrupt I'll buzz you off that chair before you can say 'Wait and see!'" said Jimmy cheerfully. "About those Founders' Scholarships. Have you read the rules?"

"Of course I haven't!"

"Well, I have. They were founded specially for poor scholars—chaps whose people couldn't afford to send them to expensive schools."

"Oh, I dare say that was in the beginning!" sneered Townsend. "So were Oxford and Cambridge, if you come to that. But it's always been worked so as to keep the outsiders outside."

"If it has, dear boy, it's been precious near to swindling, and I hope it hasn't," said Jimmy. "Anyway, that's what the Founders' Scholarships were intended for, and in this case, this year's scholarship seems to have been put to its proper use. There's nothing to complain about."

"Rot! Gentlemen, I appeal to you, not to Jimmy Silver. Are we goin' to stand havin' this rotten, rank outsider Rawson planted on us?"

"Never!"

"Bow-wow!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Futhead!"

The responses were very mixed.

"I propose," continued Townsend,

"putting the low cad in his place as soon as he arrives to-morrow afternoon. It wouldn't be so rotten if he were goin' on the Modern side; there's lots of scrubby outsiders there already——"

"Hear, hear!"—from all the Classics, and loud hoots and yells from the few Moderns in the room.

"But the rotter isn't satisfied with that. He wants to come on the Classical side—the gentlemanly side. It's disgustin'! If we put up with this we may as well put up with anythin'! As for Jimmy Silver, he don't count."

"For the love av Moses, Towny, shut your silly head!" said Flynn.

"Here, what are you doin'?" shouted Townsend, as Lovell strode up to him.

"I'm jolly well going to mop you up!" said Lovell grimly.

"Leggo! Yaroooh!"

Bump!

Townsend descended from the chair and landed on the floor with a terrific concussion. He roared, and the audience roared—with laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Do that again. Towny!"

"Back me up, you rotters!" howled Townsend, scrambling to his feet. "Kick those beasts out of the room!"

"We're ready to be kicked!" grinned Jimmy Silver.

But Towny's followers were not ready. The fellows who sympathised with Townsend were not of the stuff of which heroes are made.

Townsend glared at Lovell, who was pushing back his cuffs, quite ready for a scrap to follow. But the dandy of the Fourth thought better of it.

"I'm not goin' to scrap with you, Lovell. I'm dealin' with the new rotter now."

"Safer, as he's not here!" snorted Lovell.

"Gentlemen——"

"Hear, hear!"

"Dry up!"

"Gentlemen, I propose that when this scrubby worm Rawson gets here to-morrow we forthwith collar him and duck him in the fountain. After that

we'll rag his books and rag all his things, and ink his clothes and so on, and in a short time he'll get fed up, and clear off. All we've got to do is to make him understand that he can't stay at Rookwood, and he'll go."

"Jolly good wheeze!" said Topham. "I don't suppose the poverty-stricken cad will be able to afford new clothes, and if we ink his clobber——"

"Shame!"

"Hear, hear!"

Townsend was mounting on the chair again.

Jimmy Silver strode forward and shoved him aside without ceremony and jumped on the chair.

"Gimme my place, you rotter!"

"Gentlemen of the Fourth," said Jimmy Silver, unheeding, "you have listened to the remarks of the honourable member who has just spoken. Now you can listen to me. It's proposed to rag the new kid and muck up his things because he's very likely too poor to get new ones. That's a dirty trick!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Rats!"

"I've got this to say. I don't know the new kid from Adam, and don't specially want to. But any chap who starts ragging him for nothing will find me on his track. As captain of the Form, I put my foot down!"

"Rats!"

"Bravo!"

"The first chap who touches this fellow Rawson will be asked into the gym to settle up with me!" said Jimmy Silver. "Fair play's a jewel. Give the chap fair play. If he's a rotter I'll be down on him as soon as anybody. If he's the right sort he's not going to be ragged. That's all!"

"The Great Chief has spoken!" grinned Oswald.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jimmy Silver jumped down from the chair, and the Fistical Four left the Common-room. It was time for tea in the end study. They left the room in a buzz behind them.

CHAPTER 11.

The "Outsider" Arrives!

RAWSON arrived the next afternoon.

Mr. Bootles took him into his study first, and only a few of the Classical juniors had a glimpse at him.

Jimmy Silver & Co., as it happened, were busy on the football field, and for the time they had forgotten all about the expected new boy Townsend and his friends had not forgotten, however. Townsend & Co. did not bother much about footer, and were not much interested in what was going on on Little Side.

"Did you see him?" asked Peele of the Fourth, joining Townsend and Topham in the passage, after Rawson had followed the Fourth Form master into his study.

"Yaas," said Townsend; "just a glimpse. A hulkin', shabby-lookin' brute!"

"Looked rather nervous," said Topham.

Peele chuckled.

"Perhaps he guesses what he's goin' to get," he remarked.

"Well, he's goin' to get it, whether he guesses it or not," said Townsend. "Call some of the fellows here ready for when he comes out. We may as well begin at once, while those Fistical beasts are out of the way."

"Good egg!" said Peele.

Six or seven Classics gathered near the Form-master's study. They waited eagerly for the new boy to come out. While Jimmy Silver was off the scene, a favourable opportunity presented itself for the aristocrats of Rookwood to tackle him, and show him how he was regarded by the said aristocrats. The decided bad manners they were going to be guilty of did not worry them in the least. Perhaps they considered that aristocrats had no need of good manners. Or, perhaps, their training in that respect had been neglected.

The study door opened at last, and Rawson came out. He was the average age of fellows in the Fourth Form, but

somewhat big and muscular for his age—not tall, but well-built and thick-set. Certainly he did not look so elegant as any member of the Nutty Co., but there was little doubt that he could have knocked any one of them into a cocked hat with one drive of his heavy right arm.

His face was not handsome—not nearly so handsome as Townsend's—but there was an open and frank expression upon it which Towny's decidedly lacked. His eyes, blue and clear, had a merry gleam in their depths, and his whole expression was good-natured. There was nothing to take offence at, in fact, excepting the fact that his clothes were evidently not so expensive as most Rookwood clothes. He was, as Topham remarked in an undertone, as badly dressed as Jobson of the Fifth. But he was clean and neat from top to toe.

To the disappointment of the waiting tormentors, Mr. Bootles came out with the new junior. The Form-master sighted the nuts in the passage, and signed to them.

"Come here, Townsend. This is Rawson, the new boy, who will share your study. Rawson, this is Townsend. I hope you will be friends. Townsend, show Rawson to his study, and show him where to place his things."

If Townsend had dared to refuse a request of Mr. Bootles', he would have refused that one point-blank. He had been waiting to rag the new boy, and was called upon to show him about, and look after him! Townsend's blood boiled at the thought. But he did not venture to let his Form-master see it boiling. He answered meekly:

"Yes, sir."

"You will go with Townsend, Rawson."

"Yes, sir," said Rawson, in a deeper voice than Townsend, and a tone that was not so cultivated, and certainly not so finicking.

Mr. Bootles went back into his study, and shut the door.

There was a pause, and then Towns-

end, with suppressed rage, signed to the new boy to follow him. He had to obey the Form-master's order. It occurred to him, too, that his study would be a nice, secluded spot for putting Rawson "through it," by way of a start.

Rawson followed him up the stairs, and Topham and the rest followed on behind.

"What boots!" Rawson heard a voice remark as he went down the junior passage, and the remark was followed by a giggle.

The new junior flushed. He could not doubt that the remark was aimed at himself, and a look of surprise came over his face. He had expected polished and stately manners at Rookwood School, and had been feeling a little uneasy about his own, in consequence. Perhaps he realised now that there was no ground for uneasiness on that score.

Townsend opened the door of the study, and stood aside with mock politeness for the new junior to enter. Flynn, who was in the passage, came up and looked at Rawson.

"Sure, he doesn't look such a baste, Towny," he said.

Rawson crimsoned.

"All serene, old sport," said Flynn reassuringly. "Don't get your wool off. Ye're welcome to the Fourth, in-toirely. I don't think ye're a baste!"

"Thank you," said Rawson. "I don't see why you should have expected me to be a beast."

"Faith, and I didn't," said Flynn. "It was really Towny. Towny's a howling aristocrat. That's what comes of being brought up in a big grocery store, you know."

"You rotter!" shrieked Townsend. "You know my people ain't grocers!"

"Sure, I'm always forgetting," said Flynn. "It's Toppo's people who are grocers, and yours keep a public-house. Sorry!"

Flynn walked away, whistling, before the two nuts could make any rejoinder. Both Townsend and Topham made a movement to pursue him, but refrained. Flynn was not nearly so haughty and

exclusive as Towny and Toppo, but he could have mopped up the passage with both of them at once, so they decided to treat him with silent contempt. It was much the best way, all things considered.

Rawson, feeling and looking very puzzled, went into the study. The two nuts followed him in, and Peele and the rest crowded in the doorway. The fun was about to begin, the unfortunate Rawson being quite unaware of it.

"So this is my study?" said Rawson, in an agreeable tone.

"It's our study," said Topham.

"I mean, I'm going to share it with you."

"So Bootles says."

"It's a nice room," said Rawson.

"Glad you like it," said Townsend satirically. "I suppose it would seem a bit more home-like, wouldn't it, if there were a bench or two and a saw or so hanging up!"

The Nuts of the Fourth chuckled delightedly. Townsend had a pretty wit. But Rawson smiled, too, good-naturedly.

"I see you've heard about me," he replied.

"Yaas. You're a carpenter, ain't you?" said Topham.

"My father's a carpenter. I've learned a good bit of it from him, through helping him," said Rawson. "If there's anything that wants knocking together about the place, you can leave it to me."

"When there's any carpentry to be done, we send for a man and pay him," said Townsend, with a sniff.

"Well, that would be a waste now I'm here," said Rawson. "I could do anything that a jobbing carpenter could do."

The nuts exchanged looks of utter disgust and loathing. The fellow was actually not ashamed of knowing how to do carpentry work, and showed no desire whatever to keep his father's trade in the background. If he had lied and shuffled about it, the nuts could have understood it, and perhaps re-

spected him a little more. But it did not seem to have occurred to the unfortunate Rawson to lie and shuffle. Doubtless he might learn better in time, in Townsend's study.

"So your pater's a carpenter!" said Topham.

"My what?"

"Oh, my hat! He doesn't know what a pater is!" giggled Peele.

"Yes, I do," said Rawson, in surprise. "Pater is Latin for father. I've studied Latin, of course, or I shouldn't be here. But I don't see why you should call my father my pater."

There was a general giggle. This sublime ignorance of school customs struck Townsend & Co. as really the limit.

"Well," said Topham loftily, "here we call a father a pater, and a mother a mater."

"Do you?" said Rawson. "It seems a queer idea, but I dare say I shall fall into it. One of your school customs, I suppose?"

"Yes," said Topham contemptuously. "One of our school customs."

"I suppose you've got hammers and nails and things in your box?" grinned Peele, taking up a new line of attack.

Rawson nodded.

"Yes, I thought they might be useful, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I suppose it's not against the rules, is it?"

"Ha, ha! Only against the rules of good taste," said Townsend. "But, of course, you wouldn't know anything about that."

"I don't see what good taste has to do with it," said Rawson, colouring. "Look here, are you fellows getting at me?"

"What a beautiful expression!" murmured Topham.

"If you are, you may as well chuck it," said Rawson. "I don't like it. I thought every chap at a big school like this had good manners!"

Townsend & Co. looked a little taken

aback. They were quite satisfied with their manners. Just at this moment an eyeglass gleamed into the study, with the vacant face of Smythe of the Shell behind it.

"Got it here?" drawled Smythe. "I've heard that it's come. Do let me have a look at it, dear boys!"

"Yaas, we've got it here. Trot in, Smythey!"

Adolphus trotted in, and turned his eyeglass upon Rawson.

CHAPTER 12.

Adolphus Goes Too Far!

"By gad!" said Adolphus.

Rawson looked puzzled.

The extreme elegance and expensiveness of Adolphus Smythe, of the Shell, impressed him a little. He was not used to seeing such elegant and expensive persons at close quarters. Smythe's stare could not be called civil, but the stranger was not eager to quarrel.

He wondered whether this kind of thing was part and parcel of the manners and customs of the upper classes. He had not come to Rookwood to quarrel with the manners and customs established there. At all events, he was not in a hurry to take offence, though there was a look about his simple and honest face which indicated that if he did take offence his anger would be a serious matter.

Adolphus Smythe walked round Rawson, inspecting him through his eyeglass as if he had been some curious animal. This performance was watched with growing delight by the nuts of the Fourth. Rawson watched it with growing astonishment.

"By gad!" commented Smythe. "So this is it!"

"That's it, Smythey!" chorused the nuts.

"It's been washed," said Adolphus—"washed for the first time in its life, perhaps. But they washed it before

they sent it here. Dawson—your name's Dawson, isn't it?"

"Rawson."

"Oh, Rawson! Delightful name—so poetical!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, Rawson, I suppose you know that, as a new boy, you are called to give an account of yourself?"

"I didn't know it," said Rawson; "but I don't mind. I suppose this is some of your fun?"

"Exactly," smiled Adolphus—"some of our fun. It is a funny occasion—never occurred before in the history of Rookwood. You don't mind answerin' a few questions?"

"Not a bit."

"You see, gentlemen, it can speak, and answers quite reasonably and in passably good English," said Smythe. "The accent, perhaps, smacks of Seven Dials, but no matter. One must not be too particular. Now, Dawson——"

"Rawson."

"Yaas, I should say Rawson. My mistake. Now, Rawson, how old are you?"

"Nearly fifteen."

"Did you come straight here from the workhouse?"

"The workhouse!" repeated Rawson.

"Yaas."

"There's some mistake," said the new boy. "I've never been in the workhouse."

"Dear me!" said Smythe, in surprise. "Then appearances are very, very deceptive!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, come," said Rawson, "don't pile it on!"

"If you have never been in the workhouse, Rawson, I must take it that your father is a good plumber, and has always been in regular employment?" said Smythe gravely.

"He isn't a plumber," said Rawson; "he's a carpenter. But he's generally been in good employment. My Uncle Joe is a plumber."

The nuts burst into a yell of merri-

ment. This simple admission almost doubled them up.

"Your—your Uncle Joe is a plumber!" gasped Smythe. "Oh, my hat! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Nothing funny in being a plumber, is there?" asked Rawson, puzzled.

He was finding these merry young gentlemen puzzling in many ways.

"Not at all," said Smythe, recovering his gravity. "May we inquire after your other aristocratic relations? Which is the gasfitter?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"None just now," said Rawson. "My brother Dick was a gasfitter, but he's in the Army now."

"Captain or colonel?" asked Smythe. Rawson laughed.

"Private, of course," he said. "Middlesex Regiment. I've got a photograph of him in khaki."

"That had better be framed and hung up in the study," said Smythe. "A gasfitter in khaki would adorn any study!"

"Well, I was thinking of hanging it up," said Rawson. "Only—only——"

He looked round.

"Only what?" asked Smythe politely.

"Well, I've only got a very cheap frame," confessed Rawson, "and the pictures in this study look too good for my frame to be hung alongside them."

"You see, it is modest," said Smythe. "In these days of workin'-class swank, it is really refreshin' to come across a horny-handed son of toil who is modest. Now, which of your relations is a scavenger, Rawson?"

"None at all, as it happens."

"You wouldn't be ashamed of one if he happened to be a scavenger?"

"No. Why should I?"

"Echo answers, why?" said Smythe urbanely. "Now we want to know all about your father. Has he given up drink yet?"

"He's a teetotaler."

"Quite a model plumber!" said Smythe.

"Carpenter," said Rawson.

"Yaas, I mean carpenter. Now, the next question is, how long has he been out?"

"Out of where?"

"Prison."

Rawson's eyes glinted.

"My father has never been in prison," he said quietly. "What do you mean?"

"Never been in prison!" exclaimed Smythe, in astonishment. "You don't say so!"

"I do say so!"

"Well, well, there's somethin' very wrong with the way the police do their bizney, then," said Adolphus, shaking his head. "I'm sure he ought to have been in prison lots of times!"

"And why?" said Rawson, still very quietly.

"Why? Because he's a no-class blackguard, the same as his hopeful son," said Smythe, with a drawl. "That's why!"

Rawson did not speak for a moment. Up to this point he had been in doubt whether the elegant Adolphus was merely pulling his leg in fun. But there was no fun in Adolphus' brutal remark about his father.

The scholarship boy stepped towards the Shell fellow, with a look in his eyes that Adolphus did not quite like.

"You've no right to say things like that about my father," said Rawson.

"By gad!"

"It's a mean and rotten thing to say," continued Rawson. "If you meant it only in fun, I'm willing to look it over; but don't do it again, please!"

"Are you givin' me orders?" yawned Adolphus.

"Not exactly; but I mean what I say."

"Cheeky cad!" said Townsend.

"I don't think that's fair," said Rawson. "You wouldn't like him to speak like that about your father, would you?"

"My father's a bit different from yours, I hope," said Townsend con-

temptuously. "Don't you speak of my father, you outsider!"

"The cheek of these people in these days is astoundin'!" said Adolphus Smythe. "They think they're as good as we are, you know—they do, absolutely. Now, this blackguard——"

"Don't call me names, please," said Rawson.

"I'll call you what I like, you—you thing!" said Adolphus, with ineffable contempt. "I'll wipe my boots on you if I like!"

"Have 'em cleaned afterwards if you do!" sniggered Topham.

Rawson looked round him, for the first time seeing clearly the scornful hostility in every face. His ruddy face paled a little.

"I don't see what you want to talk to me like this for," he said. "I didn't mean to offend anybody here!"

"You are an offence in yourself, dear boy," said Smythe. "You offend our eyesight, you know. The best thing you can do is to go back to the workhouse you belong to!"

"I don't belong to a workhouse!"

"Your father ought to have had more sense than to send you here," continued Smythe, unheeding. "I suppose it was sheer ignorance and cheek. You father, dear boy, is nothin' less than a revoltin' blackguard!"

Smack!

Rawson's open hand smote the lordly Adolphus across the cheek, and he staggered backwards with a sharp yelp, very much like a dog suddenly trodden upon.

"By—by gad!" he gasped.

"I warned you," said Rawson. "No chap can speak of my father like that without getting my fist in his face. And if you want any more, I'm ready for you!"

"Why, I—I'll smash you!" shrieked Adolphus.

"I don't want to hurt you," said Rawson. "I'm stronger than you are, and I don't want to hammer you; but——"

He had no time for more. Smythe

of the Shell was springing at him like a tiger, cheered on by Townsend & Co. Rawson staggered back as he caught Smythe's right and left full in the face. He straightened up at once, however, his eyes blazing. His right arm came out, and his fist smote Adolphus full on his narrow chest, and the great Adolphus went to the floor on his back with a crash that almost made the study shake.

CHAPTER 13.

Scorned by the Nuts!

"YAROOOH!"
Such was the undignified remark of the great Adolphus as he assumed a still more undignified position on the study carpet.

Townsend & Co. made a simultaneous move forward. The rules of fair play did not trouble much the noble nuts of Rookwood. But they paused again. They did not like Rawson's look. And it occurred to them that there was terrific force behind the blow that had stretched Adolphus Smythe on his back.

"Better not touch me!" said Rawson quietly, facing the half-dozen juniors without flinching. "I don't want a row with anybody, but if you touch me I shall hit out hard."

Townsend curled his lip and stepped back. Topham helped the gasping Adolphus to his feet.

Adolphus leaned on him heavily. He was utterly knocked out by that single blow. He had not the slightest desire to come to close quarters with Rawson again.

"By gad," he gasped, "I wish you joy of that fellow in your study, Towny!"

"If you want any more, I'm ready," said Rawson.

"Don't come near me! I decline to have anythin' to do with you!" said Smythe. "I refuse to touch you! You're not fit for a gentleman to touch! I'm sorry to say, Towny, that

I can't visit this study again so long as that—that person is here!"

Smythe staggered to the door. Rawson looked at him curiously, and burst into a laugh. Until he had entered the aristocratic circle of the nuts of Rookwood, such a case of utter funk had never come to his knowledge.

Townsend & Co. looked rather dubious. It was all very well to say that the outsider was not fit to touch, but it could not be concealed that the chief of the nuts had funk in the most outrageous manner. The new junior certainly required licking and putting into his place by drastic measures. But the task was beyond the powers and the courage of Adolphus, and none of the nuts felt inclined to take it on in his place.

Rawson checked his laugh.

"I'm sorry this has happened, you fellows," he said, with an appealing look at Townsend & Co. "You could see that it wasn't my fault."

"Don't speak to us, you cad!"

"What are you calling me names for?"

"Look here!" said Topham. "We don't want you in this study. Never mind why. We don't like your sort. We want you to get out of it."

"I'll do that willingly enough if there's another study I can go into."

"You can find that out for yourself."

"That's just what I can't do. The other fellows might cut up rusty, just the same."

"I rather think they would," sneered Peele. "Let me catch you in my study, that's all!"

"Well, I shall have to stay here, then."

"So you won't go?" said Townsend.

"No, I won't! I can't!"

"Well, we can't put you out, as Bootles put you in," said Townsend. There were other reasons why the new junior could not be put out, but Townsend did not refer to those. "If you're cad enough to stay where you're not wanted, I suppose you'll do it. It's what we might expect from your sort."

"Just what we might expect," said Topham.

"I don't see what else I can do," said Rawson.

"Well, you can understand this—you can stay in this study if you're beast enough, but don't speak to us. We bar your sort."

"All right. I won't speak to you," said Rawson quietly. "I think you might be a bit more civil; but it's your own business. But look here, don't call me names any more, or there will be a row. I don't like it."

"Do you think we care what you like?" sneered Topham.

Rawson did not answer. His silence encouraged Peele, who remarked:

"Rotten outsider!"

Rawson turned towards him.

"You heard what I said!" he exclaimed.

"Don't talk to me!" said Peele, backing away a little.

"You were talking to me," said Rawson, "and you'll take back what you said, or else you'll put up your hands!"

"I don't fight with your sort!" said Peele disdainfully.

"Nor with any sort, I expect, if you can sneak out of it," said Rawson. "I think you're a rotter, myself, and you'll take back what you said, or there'll be trouble!"

"Ta-ta, Towny!" said Peele, turning towards the door. "See you later."

A grip on his collar swung him back.

"Let go, you low hound!" screamed Peele.

Rawson let go the collar, and shifted his grip to Peele's nose. It seemed to the unhappy nut that his nose was enclosed in the grip of a vice, and the water streamed into his eyes.

"Groogh!" Peele gurgled. "Led go by dose!"

"You know what you've got to do." "Help me, you fellows! Drag that ruffian off!" gasped Peele.

Townsend & Co. advanced irresolutely. Rawson changed his grip on

Peele's nose to his left hand, and clenched his right and raised it. The nuts exchanged glances, and hung back. They remembered too clearly how the great Adolphus had fared.

"Led go!" moaned Peele. "Ow—ow—ow! I—I take back what I said. Led go!"

Rawson released him.

"You can cut off," he said scornfully. "Blessed if I ever saw such a white rabbit of a fellow! Why, you're bigger than I am!"

Peele did not reply. He limped out of the study, clasping his nose in anguish. Townsend & Co., with scornful glances at the new junior, followed him. Rawson was left alone in the study. The intended rag had certainly not come off. It could not be denied that the unspeakable new fellow had had the best of it all along the line.

But Rawson did not look very cheerful.

"My word!" he murmured. "This is a go!"

For some minutes he stood quiet, a cloud upon his brow. Then he shook himself, as if shaking off unpleasant thoughts, and began to unpack his books. Meanwhile, a crowd of Classics had surrounded Townsend & Co. downstairs, to inquire what the scholarship bounder was like, and how they were getting on with him.

Townsend's description of him was quite lurid.

The new fellow was a perfect ruffian and hooligan, according to the veracious Towny. They had treated him as decently as it was possible to treat such a fellow, and he had started rows at once, and kicked up a shindy in the study. But for the fact that their self-respect forbade them to touch such a hooligan, they would have thrashed him within an inch of his life. But they had decided to ignore him, as the best way of dealing with such an utter cad.

The Classics believed as much as they chose of Townsend & Co.'s narration. What could not be doubted was

that Smythe of the Shell had had the worst of an encounter with him, and that Peele's nose was crimson, and that he was moaning nasally over it in his study.

There was a general buzz of interest when, about half an hour later, the new junior came down into the Common-room. He was looking about him, not sure yet of his way about.

"Hallo!" called out Oswald. "Here you are, kid! This is the Common-room! No charge for admission!"

Rawson brightened up at that cordial greeting. It dawned upon him that all the Rookwood fellows were not cast on the lines of Townsend & Co.

"Come on, you fellows!" said Townsend. "If that person's goin' to be here, this is no place for us!"

The nuts marched off, past Rawson, who stood in astonishment. They walked with their noses in the air, casting glances of ineffable disdain at Rawson, and filed out of the Common-room.

Dick Oswald burst into a laugh. Rawson ejaculated:

"My eye!"

CHAPTER 14.

The Right Sort!

"BLESSED if I hadn't forgotten!"

Tea was over in the end study, and the Fistical Four had started on their preparation, when Jimmy Silver made that sudden remark. Lovell looked up.

"What is it? Lines?" he asked.

"No. That new chap."

"Oh, that new chap! What about him?"

"Well, I haven't seen him," said Jimmy. "I was going to speak to him, but I forgot all about it at the footer. I wonder how he's got on?"

"I dare say he's got on all right. Get on with your prep. We're a bit late already."

"And don't jog the table, fathead!" said Raby, as Jimmy Silver rose. "You

know that leg always goes when you touch the blessed table."

"Rawson might help us with that," said Jimmy, "after prep."

"Where are you going?"

"Well, the kid's in Towny's study. May as well give him a look in."

Lovell grinned.

"There's been trouble already," he said. "I've heard from Hooker that Rawson punched Smythe of the Shell, and pulled Peele's nose."

"Well, Peele's nose has wanted pulling a long time. I don't think the worse of him for that," remarked Jimmy. "I dare say Peele shoved it in where it wasn't wanted."

"There's a set against him in the Fourth," said Newcome. "Oswald told me the nuts all walked out of the Common-room when he came in with their noses in the air."

"Silly asses!"

"Towny and Topy swear they won't share his study. They're going to dig with Peele so long as he stays there."

"All the more room for him," said Jimmy. "I'd rather have a study to myself than whack it out with Towny and Topy."

"Look here," said Lovell grimly, as Jimmy opened the door. "None of your little games!"

"Eh? What little games?"

"We're four in this study already, and we're not going to make it five!"

Jimmy Silver laughed

"I'm not going to plant him on you, old kid. I'm just going to have a look at him, and if he's decent I'm going to be civil to him."

Jimmy walked along the passage to No. 4, and tapped at the door.

"Come in!" said a voice he did not know, evidently Rawson's.

Jimmy opened the door.

Rawson was alone in the study, at work at the table. He was looking a little downcast, and evidently troubled over his work. There was no sign of Townsend or Topham, and a good many

of their belongings were gone from the room.

Rawson looked rather grimly at the captain of the Fourth.

"Well? Take a good look!" he said.

"A—a good look?" repeated Jimmy, not comprehending.

"Yes."

"I don't quite catch on. I suppose you're Rawson?"

"Yes, I'm Rawson. Take a good look, and clear!"

"Would you mind explaining what you're driving at?" asked Jimmy Silver politely. "I came in to speak a civil word to you. If you don't like the idea, I'll clear off fast enough. You won't have to tell me twice."

Rawson rose to his feet. His honest eyes met Jimmy Silver's very frankly.

"I'm sorry," he said. "No offence. But a lot of fellows have been opening the door and staring in at me, as if I were an animal from the Zoo, and I thought you were one more."

"Oh, I see!" Jimmy Silver frowned. "I'm afraid you'll have a rather rotten idea of Rookwood manners, Rawson."

"It isn't quite like I expected," said Rawson candidly. "I thought everybody at a big school like this would have very nice manners, and be as polite as a prince. But quite a lot of them aren't so well mannered as the chaps at the Council School I used to go to!"

"There are all sorts," explained Jimmy. "You'll find the fellows here much the same as fellows everywhere else—perhaps a bit more narrow-minded, some of them; but that's not really their fault. Only don't jump to the conclusion that we're all like Towny and Tippy. How are you getting on with your prep?"

"Prep?" repeated Rawson hesitatingly.

"Preparation, I mean. You know we have to prepare lessons for the morning?"

"Yes; Mr Bootles told me, and he said my study-mates would show me what was to be done," said Rawson

ruefully. "But they won't, though. I can't ask them, after the row we had. I know it's Cæsar, so I'm doing my best."

"Towny is a worm, and Tippy is another worm!" said Jimmy. "They might have told you. You're yards off the right part. Let me put you on to it."

"You're jolly good!"

"How do you get on with Latin?" asked Jimmy.

"Pretty well. It was a subject in the examination for the Founders' Scholarship, you know."

"You were a lucky bargee to bag that."

"Yes; it was luck—and jolly hard work," said Rawson. "I shouldn't ever have done it if it hadn't been for the dad. I used to work at it in his workshop, while he was planing and sawing, you know, and he'd leave off to ask me things, and help me. He learned a good bit himself on purpose to help me; but it wasn't only that, it was feeling that somebody was pleased at my getting on." Rawson paused, and coloured deeply. "But I suppose I oughtn't to speak about all that here?"

"Why not?" said Jimmy.

"Well, the fellows——" Rawson paused, and smiled. "I shall be a long time getting used to this place. I thought everybody at a Public school was a gentleman. You see, I've never entered one before to-day."

Jimmy Silver burst into a hearty laugh.

"Haven't you met any gentlemen here yet?" he asked.

"Well, not at first; but there was one in the Common-room—a fair-haired chap——"

"That's Oswald. Any more?"

"And an Irish chap. The others I've spoken to seemed to me rather rotten. I don't think a gentleman would hurt a chap's feelings for nothing."

"Quite right, my son," said Jimmy Silver. "Gentlemen aren't as common as blackberries, and they're not made by money and expensive clothes, and

dropping their 'g.s.' But when you've done your prep, come along to the end study, and you'll see some more—three of the best—four, counting myself. By the way, have you got any tools with you?"

Rawson bit his lip hard.

"Is there anything rotten in my having some tools with me?" he asked, in a low voice. "I—I saw no harm in it. I'm fond of carpentry, and I thought I might do some here in my own room."

"Of course there's no harm in it," said Jimmy, in astonishment. "Who said there was?"

"Well, Smythe said— But never mind! Why did you ask me?" asked Rawson.

"Because our table's got a gammy leg, and I thought you might lend us a hand getting it fixed, if you don't mind. We've tackled it, but it was N.G. I thought you'd know something about that kind of bizney," explained Jimmy.

Rawson's face brightened up wonderfully.

"I'll be jolly glad!" he exclaimed.

"Right-ho! Come along when you've finished, and bring your tools," said Jimmy.

"What-ho!"

Jimmy Silver returned to the end study.

CHAPTER 15.

Rawson Makes Friends!

"COME in!" sang out four voices in unison, about an hour later, as a tap came at the door of the end study.

Jimmy Silver & Co. had finished their prep, and Raby was making toffee at the study fire. The door opened, and Rawson stepped in with a very red face, and a bag in his hand.

He was plainly very nervous. It was curious that the new boy, though he could face open hostility with unflinching courage, felt awkward and nervous in the face of friendliness from fellows whom, as yet, he did not half-under-

"Here you are," said Jimmy Silver cheerily. "This is Rawson, you chaps— Lovell, Raby, Newcome! Got the tools in that bag?"

"Yes," said Rawson.

"Let's see them."

This request on Jimmy Silver's part was tactful. There was no better way of putting Rawson at his ease than in taking an interest in his tools.

Rawson turned out his bag. The Fistical Four examined its contents.

"My hat, that's a ripping set!" said Jimmy Silver. "Beats my tool-chest hollow, I must say. Must have cost a lot of tin."

"I didn't get them all at once," said Rawson. "I've used them helping my father, you know."

"Oh, I see."

"Could you make a table?" asked Lovell, with interest.

Rawson grinned.

"Yes, I could, and chairs, too!" he said.

"My hat!"

"You get on with the toffee, Raby, and we'll see to the table," said Jimmy Silver. "Turn it over."

The table was cleared and up-ended. The juniors gathered round it, and the "gammy" leg was seriously examined. It had caused the Fistical Four no end of trouble, in spite—or perhaps because of—the fact that they had made incessant attempts to mend it by driving long nails into it. The array of nails gave it, in the affected part, somewhat of the appearance of cheveux de frise. Rawson could not help grinning as he looked at it.

"I put most of those nails in," said Lovell. "Jimmy put in some. I think Jimmy's nails made it a bit more rocky than it was before."

"Why didn't you try screws?" asked Rawson.

"Well, we hadn't any screws, and besides, Jimmy's screwdriver is busted."

"Does it want screws?" asked Newcome.

"Two four-inch will do it," said Rawson. "I shall have to get these nails

out first, though, if you don't mind," he added.

"Go ahead, my son."

"And I shall want a wedge just here, too. You see, the top of the table leg has been worn away by—by——"

"Too many nails!" grinned Jimmy Silver. "I told you a lot of times you were overdoing it, Lovell!"

"It wasn't my nails that overdid it," said Lovell. "I know that."

Oswald opened the door and looked in, with Flynn.

"That toffee done yet?" he asked.

"Hallo! Are you breaking up the happy home?"

"No; mending it!" said Jimmy.

"Come in and watch. The toffee will be done by the time the mending's done."

"Right you are!"

Rawson set cheerfully to work. The juniors sat round on the overturned table and the floor watching. Rawson extracted the nails with the pincers, and with a strength of wrist the juniors noticed. There was a sudden exclamation from the passage, and Townsend looked in. Townsend stared at the scene in amazement.

"So you've taken up that outsider cad, Jimmy Silver!" he exclaimed.

Jimmy Silver did not reply. He gripped a cushion that lay near, and it whizzed through the open doorway. It caught Townsend under the chin, and fairly bowled him over. There was a loud bump in the passage, and a loud yell.

Rawson's ears burned, but he gave no other sign of having heard Townsend's words. Townsend did not return to repeat them. He limped away down the passage, mumbling, and his limp became a wild rush when Jimmy Silver stepped out to field the cushion.

Townsend fled down to the Common-room, to inform the nuts, with thrilling and breathless indignation, that the outsider was in Jimmy Silver's study, and that the iniquitous Jimmy was palling with him. Topham immedi-

ately proposed raiding the study, and giving the Fistical Four the ragging of their lives; but when he looked round for supporters, he failed to catch anybody's eye. Silent contempt was still the watchword of the nuts, and it was a great deal more comfortable than facing the knuckles of the Fistical Four.

Meanwhile, the carpentry in the end of the study was proceeding apace. All the nails having been removed—a somewhat lengthy task—Rawson set to work on the table-leg. With a tenon saw he removed the shattered portion—shattered by too liberal an allowance of nails—and fitted in a wedge, which he had made the exact shape and size required—how, the watching juniors hardly knew.

"Now hold it," he said, placing the renovated leg in position.

There were many hands ready to hold it. Rawson drove in a gimlet, and then placed a screw in position, and drove it. Driving a four-inch screw into hard wood was not easy, but Rawson's wrist seemed to be of iron. He showed no sign of aching as the long screw was steadily driven home. The other screw was put in, and Rawson rose to his feet, and collected his tools in his bag.

"I think that'll be all right," he remarked.

Jimmy Silver and Lovell grasped the table, and whirled it over and stood upon its legs. It stood like a rock. Certainly it was "ail right!"

Lovell jumped on the table, to put to the test, and it stood firm and solid under him. He jumped down in great delight.

"Topping!" he exclaimed.

Jimmy Silver clapped Rawson on the shoulder.

"Splendid! Thanks awfully, old fellow!"

"Toffee's ready!" said Raby.

"Sure, and so are we!" said Flynn.

"Sure, the table doesn't rock at all, at all, and it's a jewel ye are, Rawson, and, sure, I'll ask ye to lend me a har-

with my armchair to-morrow, if ye'll be so kind!"

And the chums of the Fourth sat down cheerily to Raby's toffee, and it was quite a merry little party in the end study—the muttering, dissatisfied "nuts" being totally forgotten. Rawson's face was very bright and happy. His first evening at Rookwood, after all, was one of the happiest of his young life.

CHAPTER 16.

Towny Knows What to Do!

"**S**HUSH! Here's Jimmy Silver!" Jimmy Silver heard that hurried whisper as he came into the junior Common-room.

Jimmy had come in to look for his chums, Lovell and Raby and Newcome of the Fourth. The Co. were not there. Townsend and Topham and Peele were there, talking in low tones, and chuckling apparently over some good joke.

But as Townsend whispered his warning, the three juniors became silent.

Jimmy Silver glanced at them suspiciously.

"Hallo! What's that I'm not to hear?" he demanded.

"Fine afternoon, ain't it?" said Townsend blandly.

"What are you three slackers numbling about?"

"Rippin' weather—what?" said Topham.

And Townsend & Co. chortled.

Jimmy Silver sniffed.

"You're plotting something, I can see that," he said. "I suppose it's something up against that new kid, Rawson. Look out for a thick ear a-piece, that's all."

And Jimmy Silver, with a disdainful snort, walked out of the Common-room.

"Rotter!" said Peele. "As captain of the Fourth, Jimmy Silver ought to be backin' us up against that new cad."

"He ought, but he won't," said Townsend. "But that doesn't make any difference to us. Rawson's got to have it!"

"Yes, rather!" said Topham.

"It would do the cad good to have a lickin'!" remarked Peele. "But——"

"But——" said Townsend.

"But——" said Topham.

The three nuts of the Fourth looked at one another very doubtfully. Licking Rawson, the outsider, was a splendid idea—it would undoubtedly do him good, from the point of view of the nuts. But there were certain difficulties in the way.

"He really ain't fit to touch!" said Townsend, after a pause. "It would be lowerin' to a chap's dignity."

"Infra dig, by gad!" said Topham. "I don't care to soil my hands on him, for one!"

"He's rather a strong beast, too!" said Peele thoughtfully.

"Of course, that's got nothin' to do with it!" said Townsend loftily.

"Ahem! Of course not!" said Peele hastily.

"Besides, my dodge is really a better one. The cad is as poor as a church mouse. Look at the clothes he wears!"

"Horrid!"

"The cut of his trousers is enough to make a fellow ill—it is, really, you know. I believe some old aunt of his makes them. I don't believe the rotter has a tailor at all!"

"And he's got the cheek to come to Rookwood—and on the gentlemanly side, too! 'Twouldn't be so bad if he were on the Modern side!"

"Well, to come back to our mutton," said Townsend. "The cad is out now, and we've got a chance. He's got the cheek to share our study, and his things are there. It will be as easy as fallin' off a form to muck them up. Bet you ninenpence to fourpence that his people haven't the money to buy him a fresh lot!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's goin' to be a beginnin'," said Townsend. "After that, we'll deal

with his clobber. He's only got two suits of clothes—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We can get at his Sunday suit any time, and we'll deal with the other while he's in bed one night—what?"

"Rippin'!"

"Come on, then!" said Townsend. "We'll have a little surprise ready for him when he comes into the study again."

The three nuts chuckled, and left the Common-room.

"Hallo! Here he is!" said Topham.

Rawson of the Fourth was in the passage.

"Seen Jimmy Silver?" he asked, as the three nuts passed him.

Townsend and Topham and Peele appeared to be deaf. They walked on without being aware, apparently, of the existence of Tom Rawson.

A flush came into Rawson's cheeks.

It died away, and a cloud settled over his brow as he watched the nuts of Rookwood disappear up the staircase. He drove his hands deep into his pockets, and tramped out into the quadrangle.

CHAPTER 17.

A Row with the Moderns!

"KEEP smiling!"

Jimmy Silver greeted the scholarship junior cheerily, as he spotted him in the quadrangle.

Rawson was tramping along moodily, his hands in his pockets. He looked up, colouring, as Jimmy greeted him.

Rawson had been only a few days at Rookwood, but he had already found his path a thorny one there.

Jimmy rather liked Rawson, but he would probably not have come much in contact with him, in the ordinary way. But he made it a point to go out of his way to be friendly with him, to make up for the shortcomings of some others of the Rookwood fellows.

"What's the trouble?" asked Jimmy Silver, stopping Rawson in the quad.

"I'm looking for those duffers in my

study; but I can spare a minute. Tell your Uncle James!"

Rawson grinned.

"Nothing," he said.

"Has Bootles been giving you lines?" asked Jimmy.

"Oh, no!"

"Knowles been cuffing you?"

"No."

"Nothing at all the matter—what?"

"Nunno!"

"Then what are you looking like a boiled owl for?" asked Jimmy.

Rawson laughed.

"I—I didn't mean to look like a boiled owl," he said. "I don't quite know what a boiled owl looks like."

"—I— It's nothing! Only—" He paused. "Well, the fellows in my study won't speak to me!"

"All the better for you," said Jimmy. "Towny and Topy are a pair of first-class duffers, and they talk like idiots! It must be a relief not to get any of their conversation. They only talk about geegees—and dead certs, too!"

"It isn't that," said Rawson moodily. "But a fellow doesn't like to be thought an outsider, even by a pair of fools like Townsend and Topham. I've been civil to them—the best I know how!"

"That was a mistake," said Jimmy gravely. "I'd advise you to knock their heads together. Then they'd say something, you bet!"

"I suppose they would," said Rawson, laughing. "But I won't do it. Perhaps they'll come round in time—hope so."

"When you get fed up with them there's always the end study," said Jimmy Silver. "You're as welcome as the flowers in May there."

"You're awfully good!" said Rawson gratefully. "If all the fellows here were like Townsend I shouldn't much like to stay."

"If they were all like Townsend, dear boy, I should not want to stay here myself. Don't think about the silly asses; they're not worth it. Do you play footer?"

"A little."

"Then come down to Little Side, and we'll see what you can do."

Rawson brightened up. Jimmy Silver generally had a brightening effect upon fellows when they were down in the mouth. He helped them to live up to his own motto of "Keep smiling."

Lovell and Raby and Newcome were discovered in the tuckshop, and Jimmy routed them out, and the chums of the Fourth went down to the footer. Flynn and Oswald and Jones minor were there, and they nodded cheerily to the new boy. All the better fellows in the Classical Fourth liked Rawson, and snobs were in a minority, which made them rather more than less unpleasant.

A Modern junior was looking on, with his hands in his pockets—Leggett of the Fourth. Leggett's lip curled as he saw Rawson with the Pistical Four.

"Hallo, young Shavings!" he remarked.

"Hallo, you Modern worm!" said Rawson cheerfully.

"Got a hammer and tacks about you?" asked Leggett, with great humour.

"No," said Rawson. "But if you want any hammering done I've got a set of knuckles here, and you're welcome to them, Leggett."

He walked up to Leggett as he spoke. The Modern junior backed away. Leggett wasn't a fighting-man. His tongue was acid; but his fists were not at all dangerous.

"Keep away from me, you low cad!" he said.

"Clear that Modern worm out!" said Jimmy Silver. "What's a Modern cad doing here, anyway? They can't play footer."

"Hands off!" roared Leggett.

But the Classical juniors, laughing, surrounded him, and he was whirled off his feet, yelling.

"Frog's march!" said Lovell.

"Hear, hear!"

Bump, bump, bump!

Leggett, roaring, was frog's marched

off the footer-ground. His roars rang far and wide.

"Yah! Leggo! Classical cads! Rescue! Rescue, Moderns!"

There was a shout from the distance, and Tommy Dodd & Co., the heroes of the Modern Fourth, rushed to the rescue.

"Buck up, Classics!" shouted Jimmy Silver

"Down with the Moderns!"

"Give the spalpeens jip!"

"Let Leggett go!" shouted Tommy Dodd, grasping the cad of the Fourth to wrench him away. "Pile in, you chaps, and lick those Classical dummies!"

"Yaroo!" roared Leggett. "Leggo!"

There was a wild and whirling combat round the unhappy Leggett. Tommy Dodd and Tommy Cook grasped his head and shoulders to wrench him away, but Lovell and Jimmy Silver had his legs, and held on like grim death.

Leggett's last state was worse than his first.

Between his friends and his foes he had a terrific time. And as the rivals of Rookwood closed in combat with a bump, both parties trampled over him. More Moderns rushed up, however, and Jimmy Silver & Co. were driven back.

"Rescue, Classics!" shouted Jimmy.

"Cave! There's Bulkeley!" gasped Oswald.

Bulkeley of the Sixth was bearing down on the scene. The two parties separated as if by magic. They did not want to argue with the captain of Rookwood. Jimmy Silver & Co. scudded back to the footer-field, and the Moderns bore Leggett off, rescued, and in great triumph.

CHAPTER 19.

Leggett is Sorry!

"D ONE them!" gasped Tommy Dodd, as the Moderns came panting to a halt outside Mr. Manders' House.

"Not that Leggett was worth the trouble," said Tommy Cook. "What was the row about, Leggett?"

Leggett gasped for breath.

"Grooh hoooh, hoooh! Oh dear! I'm bumped all over! Oh! Ow!"

"All in the day's work," said Tommy Dodd comfortingly. "We've rescued you, haven't we? What are you grousing about?"

"You silly ass, you nearly lugged my cars off!"

"Well, I had to get hold of you somewhere to get you away from Jimmy Silver hadn't I?"

"That fathead Doyle trod on my chest"

"Sure, I thought I was treading on something!" said Tommy Doyle. "Was it you, Leggett darling?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And that idiot Towle kicked my ankle!" groaned Leggett.

"Might have been your nose!" said Towle

"Oh, rats! Oh, dear!"

"But what was the row about?" asked Tommy Dodd curiously. "You generally keep clear of rows, Leggett."

"Nothing. I was chipping that new cad—"

"Do you mean Rawson?"

"Yes," groaned Leggett, "that filthy outsider I thought they'd all be down on him, same as I was; but they backed him up, instead. Ow! Ow!"

"Chipping him about being a Classical, do you mean?"

"No, fathead; about being a scholarship bounder," growled Leggett.

Tommy Dodd's eyes gleamed.

"You can leave that sort of thing to Towny and Topham and the Classical snobs," he said. "We don't want that on the Modern side."

"Oh, rats!"

"So you were setting up to be a snob in your old age, Leggett!" went on Tommy. "I don't see what a crawling worm like you has to be snobbish about, but I know jolly well that we're not going to have any Classical rot on

the Modern side. You'll apologise to Rawson."

"What?" howled Leggett.

"Or you'll be kicked round the quad. You can take your choice."

"Look here, Tommy Dodd—"

"I mean it," said Tommy Dodd coolly. "That chap Rawson is decent enough, so far as I've seen anything of him. Call him anything you like for being a Classical, that's all in the game. But don't hit below the belt."

"I'll do as I like, confound you!"

"That's just where you make a mistake," grinned Tommy Dodd. "You won't do as you like, you'll do as I like. Savvy?"

Leggett scowled and swung away towards the House.

Tommy Dodd promptly gripped him by the shoulder and swung him back.

"Let go!" shouted Leggett furiously.

"Take his other arm, Tommy Doyle!"

"Sure I don't like touching the reptile, Tommy Dodd, but I'll do it to oblige you."

"Leggo!"

"This way!" said Tommy Dodd.

Between the two Tommies, Leggett was marched off, wriggling. Tommy Cook followed behind, helping Leggett with his boot when he hung back. The little party marched on the football-ground, where the Classics were punting a ball about.

"Blessed if those Modern worms ain't coming back!" exclaimed Raby. "Give 'em socks. Bulkeley's gone in."

"Pax!" called out Tommy Dodd. "We're a flag of truce!"

"Oh, rats!" said Jimmy Silver warmly. "What are you bringing that reptile here for, then? Take him away and bury him!"

"He wants to apologise to Rawson, and we're seeing him through."

"Oh," said Jimmy. "I see! Here, Rawson!"

"I don't!" yelled Leggett.

"Yes, he does; that's only his way of putting it," said Tommy Dodd calmly. "We're going to help him get it out by tweaking his nose—like that."

"Yarrah!"

Rawson came up, looking puzzled. He stared at the three Tommies and stared at the writhing, wriggling cad of the Fourth.

"What's wanted?" he asked.

"Leggett wants to apologise for being a howling cad," explained Tommy Dodd. "Go ahead, Leggett!"

"I won't!" shrieked Leggett.

Tweak!

Leggett uttered a fiendish yell. There was a howl of laughter from the Classicals. They had never seen an apology offered under such peculiar conditions before.

"Pile in, Leggy!" said Tommy Doyle. "Get it over! Sure, ye're wasting time!"

"Repeat after me," said Tommy Dodd. "I, Luke Leggett, am sorry I acted like a dirty, crawling worm and a Classical snob——"

"Here, draw it mild!" said Lovell.

"I'm referring to Townsend, dear boy. Go it, Leggett. If a little tweak will help you get it out——"

"Yoop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I—I——" stuttered the infuriated Leggett. "I—I'm sorry I acted like a dirty, crawling worm and a—a Classical snob! Ow! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There!" said Tommy Dodd. "That's the proper style. Leggett can't help being a disgrace to Rookwood, but he knows how to apologise, you see. Now, cut off, you rotter, and we'll race you to the Modern side. Every time we get near enough, we shall kick hard, so put your beef into it!"

Leggett started off at top speed, with the three Tommies in hot pursuit. Leggett ran his hardest; but each of the Tommies got in a couple of kicks before the unfortunate cad of the Fourth dodged into Mr. Manders' House, and escaped.

Jimmy Silver chuckled.

"We might try that dodge on Towny and Topy," he said thoughtfully. "It seems to work well with Leggett."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the Classical juniors, grinning, returned to the footer practice. And, much to Jimmy Silver's satisfaction, Rawson showed that he knew how to play the game, and Rawson, too, was delighted when he learned that he was to be put down at once as a reserve for the Classical junior eleven.

CHAPTER 19.

The Turning of the Worm!

RAWSON came into his study some time later, looking very ruddy and cheery. He had kept away from the footer hitherto, apprehensive of rebuffs from the Classical fellows.

Although Rawson was very quiet and very calm, he was sensitive, and the unreasoning prejudice of the Classical snobs hurt him. But his welcome on the footer-ground by Jimmy Silver & Co. had cleared off his doubts on that score, and the prospect of taking a regular part in the junior games elated him. The practice in the keen fresh air had done him good, too, and he was feeling unusually cheerful as he came in. He had had tea in the end study with the Fistical Four—a very cheery meal.

The brightness faded out of his face a little, however, as he entered his own study to do his preparation. Townsend and Topham were there, at work on their prep, and they did not look up as he came in, and kept up their usual appearance of being totally oblivious of his presence.

Towny and Topy would have been very pleased to expel the new junior from the study by force of arms. But Towny and Topy were not fighting-men like Flynn, and the probability was that the sturdy Rawson could have mopped up the study with both of them at once.

They had adopted the safer and at the same time more bitter and malicious method of sending the new

junior to Coventry in his own study. Rawson's quarters were not very cheerful, ignored by his study-mates, and never looked at excepting with a curling lip. But Rawson was patient and quiet, and his patience led his study-mates to adopt harsher measures than they would otherwise have ventured upon.

Rawson was accustomed to stony silence in the study, broken only by Towny and Topy's remarks to one another. He took no notice of the two, but proceeded to set about his work. But an unexpected difficulty cropped up here. To "prepare" the morning's lesson he required a Virgil, a dictionary, and his Latin Principia. The books were usually on the shelf, but they had disappeared now.

Unwilling to speak to the two supercilious young rascals working at the table, Rawson looked about the study for the books, though he could guess easily enough that Townsend and Topham had put them out of sight.

But the volumes were not to be found, and he turned to them at last.

"Have you fellows seen my books?" he asked.

Only the scratch of a pen answered him. Topham went on writing; Townsend went on studying his "crib."

Rawson's cheeks flushed.

"I want my books," he said in a louder tone.

"Pass the dic, Towny," said Topham, apparently deaf to Rawson.

"Here you are, old chap!"

Rawson's eyes were gleaming, but he held back his temper, and resumed his search for the missing books. He found them at last jammed behind the book-case. As he drew them out, he uttered an exclamation. Each of the books had been torn, cut, and defaced with ink. They were utterly useless.

Rawson looked at the books almost with tears in his eyes. At Rookwood all school books had to be paid for, and the value of the books was a considerable item to the scholarship junior. But that was not the worst. Without

them, he could not possibly do his preparation.

"Who did this?" he asked, laying the defaced books on the table.

No reply.

"Whoever did it was a rotten worm!" said Rawson.

"Let me see," said Townsend thoughtfully. "Est is conspectu—is that dative or ablative, Topy?"

"I can't do my prep without my books!" said Rawson.

Frozen silence.

Rawson's anger was rising fast. He understood clearly enough the game of the two young rascals. He could not replace his books without going to the Form-master—and betraying the "rag" to Mr. Bootles meant branding himself as a "sneak"—which would have delighted the Rookwood snobs who were anxious to find pretences for their persecution. But without the books he could not do his work, which meant trouble in the Form-room in the morning.

So far as Townsend and Topham could see, Rawson was in a cleft stick, and they did not see that he could do anything. There was a surprise in store for them.

"You hear me?" said Rawson quietly. "I can't work without my books. You've chosen to destroy mine. I shall take yours!"

"Wh-at!" ejaculated Townsend, startled into speaking.

Rawson took the dictionary that Topham was consulting, and drew it to his own side of the table. He picked up Townsend's Principia and Virgil, and placed them beside it. Towny and Topy watched him, almost petrified.

"You guttersnipe!" burst out Townsend, at last. "Give us our books!"

"They're my books now," said Rawson.

"Your books!" shrieked Topham.

"Yes; you've destroyed mine, and I'm going to use yours instead. You can have these."

Rawson picked up his torn dictionary and the worn and inky Virgil. He

threw the first at Topham's head, and the second at Townsend's.

Evidently the worm was turning!

Townsend yelled, and Topham gasped and ducked.

"I'm fed up with this," continued Rawson. "I'm using these books now. I'll let you use them when I've finished!"

"When you've finished!" howled Townsend. "We've got to do our prep."

"You should have thought of that before you spoiled my books!"

"Give us our books, you rotter!"

Rawson shrugged his shoulders and sat down to work. Towny and his chum exchanged furious glances. Both rose to their feet at once.

"Are you going to hand over those books?" asked Townsend in a tone of concentrated rage.

"No."

"Then we'll take them, you gutter-snipe!"

"I'll tackle either of you—I don't mind," said Rawson coolly.

"You'll tackle us both together if you don't hand over those books at once!" said Topham threateningly.

"Both together, then," said Rawson, rising. "I don't care! You won't have those books, anyway, till I've done my prep."

"Hand them over!"

"Rats!"

"We've got to have them, Topy," said Townsend. "Collar the cad!"

The two nuts advanced upon Rawson round the sides of the table. Rawson pushed back his cuffs calmly. The nuts were two to one, but they looked a good deal more hesitating than Rawson did.

"Well, come on," said Rawson as they paused and exchanged glances over the table.

"Will you give us those books?"

"No, I won't!"

Townsend made a grasp at the dictionary. Rawson caught his wrist, and with a twist of his sturdy arm whirled him away from the table.

"Go for him, Topy!" shouted Town-

send desperately; and Topham sprang upon the new junior from behind.

Rawson let go Townsend and whirled round upon Topham. The latter, clutching him, was whirled off his feet. Rawson shortened his arm, and delivered an upper-cut in the twinkling of an eye, and Topham went to the floor with a crash.

He lay there, gasping and nursing his jaw, feeling as if he had been suddenly caught by an earthquake.

Then Rawson turned upon Townsend. The dandy of the Fourth put up his hands to meet a driving attack. Towny's white and delicate hands, however, were not of much use against Rawson's heavy drives. Townsend was driven right round the table, blow after blow coming home on his face, till he stumbled over Topham and measured his length on the floor.

"Oh, by gad!" gasped Townsend. "Yow-ow-oh! Keep off, you ruffian! Yow-oo!"

Rawson looked down grimly on the two nuts.

"Have you had enough?" he asked quietly.

"Yow-ow! Yaas!"

"Yaas, you rotter! Yowow!" moaned Topham, nursing his jaw. "You hooligan! Keep off! I don't want anything to do with you! Oh, my jaw! Oh!"

"I didn't want a row," said Rawson. "You would have it."

He sat down quietly at the table.

Townsend and Topham scrambled up, Topham still holding his jaw, and Townsend rubbing his nose. Rawson sat with his back to them, and the two nuts were strongly tempted to make an attack in the rear; but they refrained, not from motives of fair play, but from a wholesome fear of the consequences.

With suppressed groans, the nuts of the Fourth limped out of the study—to do their prep in Peele's study, and borrow his books.

Rawson worked on quietly, with the books he had taken possession of. It

was a case of to the victor the spoils. The "rag" had not turned out quite as the nuts had intended.

Peele stared at his downcast pals as they came into his study.

"What's the matter with your jaw, Topsy?" he asked.

"Yow-ow!"

"What have you been doin' to your nose, Towny?"

"Wow-wow!"

"Well, you look a merry pair," said Peele unsympathetically. "You don't mean to say you let that outsider handle you like that?"

"Groogh!"

It was some time before the nuts felt equal to explaining. Peele whistled as he listened to their lugubrious account.

"A regular ruffian!" he said. "We ought to get Smythe to lick him. Smythe's bigger than he is. He could handle him if he had pluck enough!"

"He hasn't," growled Topham. "Rawson knocked him down the other day, and Smythe sneaked away."

"He might go into trainin' for it if we egged him on," said Peele. "He's a head taller than Rawson, dash it all! Look here! There'll be no standin' that hooligan unless one of our crowd can lick him!"

"There's other ways," said Townsend savagely. "There's his clobber. We'll see what he looks like when he gets up in the mornin', the cad!"

And the hardly used nuts were somewhat consoled by the prospect.

CHAPTER 20.

Exchange No Robbery!

CLANG—clang—clang!

Jimmy Silver, always the first out of bed, turned out as the rising-bell began to clang over Rookwood School.

Townsend and Topham, always the last, yawned and turned over.

Lovell and Raby and Newcome were the next out, and Rawson. The cheery juniors splashed merrily in cold water.

Townsend & Co. had professed to be surprised at seeing the scholarship junior take a cold bath in the morning. They were not quite so liberal with cold water on cold mornings themselves.

Rawson rubbed himself down, glowing and ruddy, and began to dress Townsend and Topham, sitting up in bed, winked at one another and watched.

Rawson took his clothes off the chair where they were neatly folded. As he lifted them, the jacket and trousers hung in strips in his hands. Rawson gazed at them blankly. In the dark hours of the night, the clothes, had been ripped to pieces with a knife.

"Hallo! What's the matter?" asked Jimmy Silver as Rawson uttered a roar of wrath.

"Look at my clothes!"

"Great Scott!"

"What a rotten, dirty trick!" exclaimed Lovell. "You'll have to put on your Sunday bags, kid!"

Rawson nodded and went to his box. Townsend and Topham smiled sweetly. A discovery awaited Rawson in his box.

Quietly the new junior drew out his Sunday clothes. They were ripped to strips.

Jimmy Silver's brow grew dark as he looked at them, hanging in tatters in Rawson's hand.

"Whoever did that wants the licking of his life!" he said angrily.

"Never mind," said Rawson.

"But what are you going to wear?"

"The dear boy has only two suits you know," chortled Townsend. "Hark, cheese, Rawson. A chap should really have more than two suits, you know!"

"Shut up, you cad!" growled Lovell. All the Classical Fourth were looking at Rawson, wondering what he would do.

Rawson seemed very calm.

"You must wear something, Rawson," said Raby. "I'll lend you some clobber, if you like."

"All serene," said Rawson. "I don't need it."

"But what clobber are you going to wear, then?"

"Townsend's."

"What!" yelled Townsend, with a jump. "Mine!"

"Yes, yours," said Rawson calmly. "Your things will fit me—a bit tight, perhaps, but I can manage."

"Do you think I shall let you touch my clobber, you rat?" yelled Townsend, bounding out of bed.

"I think you can't help it. I'm going to put on your clothes to-day, as you've cut up mine, and I'm going to have Topham's Sunday clothes."

"My Sunday clothes!" shrieked Topham, aghast.

"Yes, certainly."

Rawson took Townsend's elegant "clobber," and began to put them on. There was a yell of laughter from the Classical Fourth.

"But—but are you sure it was those chaps cut up your clobber, Rawson?" asked Oswald.

"Quite sure. They tore up my books last evening in the study——"

"Another dirty trick!" said Jimmy Silver.

"I had to take their books instead."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm going to keep their books until they buy me a fresh set," said Rawson quietly. "I can't afford to buy new ones myself. I think that's fair."

"Fair as a die!" chuckled Flynn.

"More power to your elbow!"

"Let my clothes alone!" screamed Townsend.

Rawson went on dressing.

"You've got nothing to complain of, Towny," chuckled Jimmy Silver. "The kid can't go down in his pyjams. You ought to have expected this."

Towny and Topy certainly ought to have expected it, after what had happened in the study the previous evening. But they didn't. They were thunderstruck.

"Give me my clothes!" exclaimed Townsend, advancing upon Rawson with his fists clenched.

Rawson put up his hands, and the

dandy of the Fourth backed away promptly enough.

"You won't have them unless you take them," said Rawson. "The same applies to you, Topham. I'm going to take your Sunday suit and lock it in my box."

"You thievin' scoundrel!" yelled Topham.

Rawson shrugged his shoulders.

"I shall keep your clothes until you pay for mine. My people are too poor to be stuck for unnecessary expenses like this!"

The Fistical Four chortled gleefully. Rawson's drastic method of dealing with the problem tickled their sense of humour. It was fortunate for Rawson that he was a "strong man of his hands." Such drastic measures had to be backed up by physical force. Luckily, Rawson had the physical force.

"You won't give me my clothes?" panted Townsend, stammering with rage.

"No."

"Then I'll go straight to Bootles and ask him to make you!"

"Sneak!" hooted Flynn.

"Sneak or not, that guttersnipe isn't going to steal my clothes!"

"Hold on!" said Jimmy Silver quietly. "If you go to Bootles, Towny, he will want to know why Rawson has taken your clothes. You know best whether you want Bootles to know that you've cut up his clobber. It means a flogging!"

Townsend paused. In his rage, that very obvious consideration had escaped him. But he thought of it now. The destruction of the scholarship junior's clothes would have been regarded very seriously indeed by the Head.

"Keep smiling," said Jimmy. "It's only tit for tat. You've asked for it, you know!"

Townsend and Topham looked at one another in helpless wrath. There was nothing for it but to submit, or to overcome Rawson in fistical combat, and they had had enough of the latter alternative.

Rawson finished 'dressing himself calmly. The change was to his advantage, for Townsend's clothes, if they did not fit exactly, were much better than his own, and very much more expensive. Having dressed, he went to Topham's box and threw the lid up.

"Let my box alone, you hound!" yelled Topham.

Unheeding, Rawson took out Topham's neatly folded Sunday suit, and transferred it to his own box—a proceeding that was watched with many chuckles by the Fourth Formers. Topham watched it in helpless rage. Rawson carefully emptied the pockets, and those in the suit he was wearing, pitching the articles on Towny's bed. Then he locked up the captured suit in his box, and put the key in his pocket.

"If you're not satisfied, you can pay for my things you've destroyed," he said quietly. "I'll let you know the exact figure. But I shall have to wear your clothes till I get new ones."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You poverty-stricken rotter!" snarled Townsend.

Rawson whistled, and walked out of the dormitory. He left the Classical Fourth shouting with laughter. Even Peele had joined in the laugh against his discomfited friends.

Townsend, who had plenty of clothes, disinterred another suit to put on. His face was as black as thunder as he dressed.

Once more the rag had turned against the ragers, and, what was worse for the unhappy nuts, they had had to back down in public, and display to all the Fourth the fact that they dared not tackle the scholarship Junior hand to hand. It was all very well to assume lofty contempt towards Rawson, but lofty contempt, coupled with barefaced funk, was not convincing. Never had the nuts of the Fourth felt and looked so utterly humiliated and beaten. But all the sympathy they received from their Form-fellows was expressed in bursts of laughter.

CHAPTER 21.

The Great Adolphus Takes It On!

"YOU could do it, Smythey."
 "It's up to you, you know."
 "You're the very chap."

"The right man in the right place, by gad!"

Adolphus Smythe, the dandy of the Shell, was holding quite a little court in his study.

Adolphus was looking pleased, but a little doubtful.

It was very agreeable to be flattered and coaxed, and soft-sawdered, and buttered-up generally.

But Adolphus had his doubts.

Townsend and Topham and Peele were all talking at once. Howard and Tracy, Smythe's chums in the Shell, were backing them up heartily.

And the burden of their song was that it was up to the great Adolphus to stand up for the honour of Rookwood by bestowing a terrific thrashing upon the rank outsider who had wedged into the school.

"Once he's been licked we can deal with him. Smythey could make him give us back our books and clobber."

"Why don't you lick him, Towny, begad?" asked Adolphus.

"I'm not up to your form, Smythey," said Townsend diplomatically.

And the egregious Adolphus nodded assent to that.

"You're a head taller than he is, and longer in the reach," said Peele. "And, dash it all, you're a good boxer, Smythey!"

"Yaas, that's so."

"And he punched your head the day he came, when you were chippin' him in our study," said Topham.

Adolphus reddened.

"I choose to treat him with contempt," he said.

"Ahem! Exactly! But these low brutes don't understand contempt. What they need is a fearful licking, to put 'em in their place."

"Jimmy Silver could lick him," said Howard, "but the rotter has made

friends with him instead. He's rather a low cad himself."

"Smythey is really a better boxer than Jimmy Silver," said Tracy. "And a little trainin' would put you in top-pin' form, Smythey."

"Yeas, I could put in a bit of trainin' first," said Adolphus thoughtfully. "But really, dear boys, the blackguard's hardly worth my while."

"But look at the position," urged Townsend. "Here there comes a fellow from the lower classes to Rookwood. He treats us as if we belonged to the lower classes instead of him! What's the good of belonging to the upper classes if we can't keep those bounders in their place? It's a disgrace for the upper classes to funk the lower classes—now, isn't it?"

"Hear, hear!"

"It's up to you, Smythey."

Adolphus Smythe lighted a cigarette very thoughtfully.

Adolphus was not averse to gaining a little cheap glory by licking a fellow smaller than himself. He fully agreed with his chums that that extremely obstreperous member of the lower classes—Tom Rawson—ought to be thrashed and put in his place. But there was a lingering doubt in Smythe's mind. He was not quite sure whether he could do it, and whether, if he could do it, he would not be severely handled in doing it. That was a very important consideration.

Rawson had certainly punched Adolphus for impertinence a week ago. Adolphus had assumed an attitude of lofty disdain; but it had been very broadly hinted that Adolphus' disdain was not founded upon a conscious sense of superiority, but upon sheer funk, which was very exasperating to the lofty, disdainful Adolphus.

"The fact is, it's makin' the beast popular, his bein' able to lick any of our crowd," said Howard. "He actually knocked my cap off this mornin'. I was simply sniffin' at the beast. He knocked my cap off. I declined to be drawn into a vulgar row with him."

"He sticks in our study like a monarch of all he surveys," said Topham. "He's got our books, and he's wearin' our clothes because we tore his up. He'll be thinkin' soon that we're all afraid of him."

"And it's simply impossible to put him in his place without lickin' him," said Tracy. "That kind of person is impervious to contempt. I was curlin' my lip at him yesterday, just to show how I felt, and he only asked me if I was born with a face like that. A vulgar remark!"

"And hardly anybody will agree to send him to Coventry," said Peck plaintively. "Only our crowd. And the fellows are all laughin' at us."

"Laughing at us, you know!" said Tracy.

"And the Modern cads are makin' a regular joke of it," said Townsend. "That low brute, Dodd, told me Rawson was like Cæsar, because he came and saw and conquered. There's only one Modern chap up against him, and that's Leggett; and everybody on that side despises Leggett."

Adolphus Smythe nodded.

"It's sickenin'!" he agreed.

"It was those rotters in the end study began it," said Topham. "If they'd been down on him it would have been all serene. But they weren't. We can't do anythin' with him unless we can produce a man who can lick him. We're misunderstood by all the fellows. They think we funk tacklin' him, because we don't do anythin' but sneer at him. It's rotten to be misunderstood."

"I'll think about it," said Adolphus at last.

He was the last hope of the Giddy Goats of Rookwood. Unless the obnoxious new boy could be licked, the persecution would have to stop. What was the sense of sneering at a fellow and scuttling off if he looked round? Evidently it was no use. It had been all very well while Rawson's patience lasted; but the worm had turned now, and that made all the difference.

"Go into trainin' for it, and challenge him for Wednesday next," said Townsend encouragingly. "We'll all be there to back you up."

"You'll lick him easily, Smythey."

"Yans, I presume I should lick him," said Adolphus loftily. "A fellow like me is not likely to be beaten by a person from the lower class. But—but I don't want to make hard work of it, so I'm goin' into trainin' a bit."

"Good egg!"

"Come and challenge him now!" exclaimed Townsend, eager to strike the iron while it was hot. "You'll have plenty of time for trainin' before Wednesday."

Adolphus hesitated. He did not quite like the task. But he was not imperious to the force of public opinion. His pals expected it of him. He was the great chief of the nuts, and chieftainship brought its responsibilities as well as its pleasure. His prestige was at stake. He could not refuse without openly admitting that he funked the contest. And if he disappointed and disgusted his fellows in that flagrant manner the glory would be departed from Israel with a vengeance.

Besides, Adolphus considered, why shouldn't he be able to lick the brute? He was more than a year older, he was nearly a head taller, he was longer in the reach, and he was a good boxer in his way. All that Adolphus lacked, as a matter of fact, was pluck. In the general atmosphere of praise and flattery and soft-sawder, Adolphus felt his courage rise. He made up his mind.

His followers watched him eagerly as he rose, and threw his cigarette into the grate.

"That low cad won't let us smoke in our study!" said Topham. "He's actually dared to interfere with us personally! He says he doesn't like a study bein' turned into a tap-room, by gad!"

"Cheeky cad!" said Adolphus. "Leave him to me."

"Come on, Smythey!"

"I'm comin'!"

"The cad's in the Common-room now," said Tracy. "We'll corner him there and challenge him."

Adolphus marched out of the study feeling quite bucked up by the general satisfaction and confidence. After all, it was something to be the chosen champion of the choice spirits of Rookwood.

Townsend and Topham looked rather curiously at one another as they followed the rest down the passage.

"Do you think he can lick him, Towny?" Topham murmured.

"He's big enough," said Townsend.

"Yes; but——"

"Well, if he's licked it will do him good, and take some of the swank out of him," said Townsend coolly.

Topham chuckled. Whichever way it worked out, the result seemed good, from the point of view of Towny and Topy.

But they did not explain those private views to Adolphus. Their remarks to Adolphus were of the most flattering nature, and, indeed, before he reached the Common-room Adolphus Smythe almost began to believe that he really was as brave as a lion, and a very great chief indeed.

CHAPTER 22.

Smythe in Earnest!

RAWSON was in the Common-room, playing chess with Jimmy Silver. Jimmy was rather given to chess in his quieter moments, and rather prided himself upon being a good hand at the game. He had discovered, not without surprise, that Rawson could play his head off. Rawson had given him a rook in the present game, but Jimmy found it hard work to hold his own.

There was quite a bustle in the room as Adolphus & Co. marched in. The chess players did not look up, but a good many fellows glanced round. The manner and bearing of the great Adol-

phus indicated that something was "on."

"There's the rotter!" said Townsend.

Adolphus walked up to the chess table and dropped his hand on Rawson's shoulder.

"A word with you!" he said haughtily.

Rawson looked up impatiently.

"Don't bother now—I'm playing!"

The countenance of Adolphus became crimson with wrath. This person from the lower classes told him not to bother! As if a word from Adolphus was not a distinguished honour for such a person!

"Excuse me," said Smythe, with elaborate and ironical politeness, "I must bother. I've a word to say to you, young ragamuffin!"

"For goodness' sake shut up, Smythe!" said Jimmy Silver irritably. "If you want to gas, go and gas somewhere else!"

"My business is with this young shaver," said Smythe calmly. "Get up, Rawson!"

"Go and eat coke!"

"Shall I lift you up by your collar?"

Rawson jumped up.

"Now, what do you want, you drawing fool?" he exclaimed.

Adolphus extracted an eyeglass from his well-fitting waistcoat, adjusted it in his eye, and surveyed Rawson with lofty scorn.

"Only a few words," he said icily. "It's no pleasure to me to speak to a person of your class. I want you to understand that Rookwood resents your presence in the school—"

"What!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver.

"I'm not talking to you, Silver; I'm talkin' to this cad, Rawson, your presence is regarded as disgustin'. We're fed up with you. You don't even know how to keep your place. I'm goin' to teach you!"

"Do you mean that you want me to punch your nose again?" asked Rawson.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I mean that I'm goin' to thrash you, you young scoundrel!" said Adolphus. "It's really rather beneath my dignity to touch you. But, takin' everythin' into consideration, I'm goin' to thrash you as a lesson to you."

"Well, come on," said Rawson, pushing back his cuffs in a business-like manner. "I'll get on with the game after I've knocked this silly idiot flying, Jimmy Silver."

"Go it!" said Jimmy cordially. "Have you made your will, Adolphus?" Smythe drew himself up haughtily.

"I'm not fighting you now, Rawson," he said. "I challenge you for Wednesday afternoon, behind the abbey. If you don't turn up, I brand you as a coward before all Rookwood."

Rawson laughed.

"I'll turn up," he said. "But if it isn't till Wednesday, what the merry dickens are you bothering me for now? Cut off, for goodness' sake!"

And Rawson sat down again and went on with his game. The Fistical Four chuckled at the expression on Smythe's face. However, as he was not prepared to tackle Rawson immediately, there was nothing for it but to cut off. Adolphus marched away with all the dignity he could muster in the trying circumstances.

Jimmy and Rawson finished their game, and Jimmy rose and stretched himself.

"Coming down to the gym?" he asked.

"Yes, if you like!"

"You may as well have the gloves on a bit if you're tackling Smythe in a real set-to on Wednesday. He's half as big again as you are!"

"Yes; all right. I don't know what he wants to pick a row with me for," said Rawson. "It's a week since I punched his nose, and more."

Jimmy Silver grinned.

"Smythe has taken his time to think it out," he said. "The really brave chap never acts in a hurry. Come on!"

The chums of the Fourth proceeded

to the gym, where Rawson put on the gloves with Jimmy Silver. His boxing was not quite up to Jimmy's style, but his strength was great, and his bulldog determination greater. By the time the round or two were over, Jimmy felt pretty convinced that Adolphus would have reason to feel sorry for himself on Wednesday.

Meanwhile, Adolphus Smythe was hard at work on the punchball in his study.

He was fairly in for it now, and it had to be gone through. He did not mean to get a licking if he could help it. He found his wind very short, after a few slogs at the ball.

"I'm goin' to chuck up cigarettes till after Wednesday, dear boys," he confided to his study-mates. "No good runnin' risks."

And Howard and Tracy agreed.

Being fairly committed to the contest, Adolphus Smythe left no stone unturned. During the next two or three days quite a remarkable change came over his habits.

The lazy, unfit slacker of the Shell was bucking up.

There were no more smokes in the study. There was boxing practice with his devoted friends every evening. There were sprints round the quad instead of lollings in the easy-chair.

It was all a very painful infliction to Adolphus, who wished it were well over. In his quieter moments he sincerely wished he had not allowed himself to be persuaded. But it was impossible to back out now.

CHAPTER 23.

Adolphus Distinguishes Himself!

JIMMY SILVER grinned cheerfully as a big crowd gathered behind the abbey ruins on Wednesday afternoon. The story of the coming contest had spread, and half Rookwood seemed to be determined to see it. The Classical Fourth were there to a man, and most of the Shell had come to see

Adolphus in his new turn as a fighting champion. Tommy Dodd & Co. came over from the Modern side, greatly interested. Tommy Cook expressed the opinion that Smythe couldn't lick a bunny rabbit, and offered to help carry home the pieces when Adolphus was finished. Tommy Doyle suggested tying the combatants together so that Adolphus couldn't run away.

The fight was fixed for three o'clock, but long before that time there was a big crowd on the scene. It was a secluded spot, and the contest was not likely to be interrupted by troublesome masters and prefects. Jimmy Silver had brought along gloves for Rawson, and Townsend brought a pair for Adolphus. Gloves were to be used, as they generally were in serious fistical encounters at Rookwood. Adolphus, indeed, had thought of bare knuckles as a means of bringing Rawson even more conclusively to his senses; but on reflection he had decided not, Rawson being quite indifferent on the matter either way.

There was a buzz as the great Adolphus was seen approaching, in the midst of an admiring circle of friends. Adolphus had been in hard training, and had shown form that surprised his own backers, and their confidence was at its height. The greatly desired thrashing of the outsider was coming at last.

"Here we are, dear boys," said Adolphus. "Is the cad here? I'm not goin' to be kept waitin' for him."

"My man's here," said Jimmy Silver, "waiting for you!"

Jimmy helped Rawson off with his jacket. Adolphus glanced rather anxiously at Rawson. He hoped to see some signs of indecision or funk in his face. But Tom Rawson was looking just the same as usual. His ruddy, healthy face did not blanch under the eagle eye of Adolphus.

Townsend peeled off Smythe's well-fitting jacket, and helped him on with the gloves.

"Fee! fit?" he asked.

"Fit as a fiddle!" said Adolphus. "Ready to lick that cad, you know. Hardly worth the trouble, but I'm goin' to do it."

"Bravo!"

"Who's timekeeper?" asked Jimmy Silver.

"I am!" said Tracy promptly.

Jimmy shook his head.

"We'll have a disinterested party for timekeeper," he said. "Tommy Dodd will do, as he's a Modern."

Tracy scowled, but he had to give in. If he had intended to give his chief any little advantages, as was possible, he was disappointed. Tommy Dodd took out his silver watch.

"Ready?" he asked.

"Oh, yaas!"

"I'm ready," said Rawson.

"Seconds, out of the ring!" said Tommy Dodd, in a businesslike manner. "Now, then, shake hands!"

"I decline to shake hands with that sounder!" drawled Adolphus.

"Shame!" said several voices.

Smythe of the Shell glanced round insolently. Rawson bit his lip.

"Let's get on," he said.

"Time!"

The first round started. Tommy Dodd kept one eye on his watch and the other on the combat. All the other fellows, crowded round in a thick ring, kept both eyes on the combat.

Adolphus was a good deal the taller of the two, and he looked like having great advantages. But Rawson's sturdy, well-knit figure was as strong as an oak, and his honest face was calm, his eyes clear and steady. There was not much doubt who was the fitter of the two.

Smythe of the Shell commenced the attack, sailing in for all he was worth, so to speak. To his surprise, Rawson did not yield an inch.

Adolphus might as well have charged a brick wall.

Both his fists came through Rawson's guard, and bumped on his face, but Rawson was hitting out, too, and his

right crashed into Adolphus' eye, and his left on Adolphus' noble nose.

The Shell fellow staggered back, and the Fourth Former followed him up, driving hard. There was a murmur as Adolphus was driven fairly round the ring.

"Buck up, Smythe!"

"Go it! This ain't a foot-race!"

"Stand up to him, Smythey!"

Biff, biff, biff!

Rawson's steady eyes never left his opponent's. Adolphus' hitting and guarding were both growing wild and erratic. As a matter of fact, Adolphus was in a state of alarm. He had screwed up his courage to the sticking-point, but it seemed to have come loose again.

"Time!" called Tommy Dodd.

Adolphus gasped his way to his second. Townsend made a knee for him, and Smythe sank on it, panting.

"For goodness' sake, buck up!" whispered Townsend, as he fanned his heated champion. "Stick to him, and hit hard!"

"I'm goin' to!" mumbled Smythe.

"Stand your ground, you know, and hit."

"I'm not askin' for your advice, Townsend!"

Townsend grunted. If ever anybody showed signs of the white feather, Adolphus Smythe was showing them then.

"Time!"

Rawson stepped up briskly, and Adolphus entered the ring much more slowly. The combatants faced one another for the second round.

There was a great deal of grinning among the onlookers by this time. Rawson's cool and steady fighting had damaged Adolphus' nerves. Every fellow present could see that Smythe was growing "funky," and there was laughter as he backed and dodged, and dodged and backed, seeking to escape close quarters.

"Go it, Smythe!"

"Back up!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What a blessed funk!" said Oswald. The nuts were looking furious. This was their champion—this the great chief who had gone into special "train'n'" for the purpose of licking the outsider!

"Pile in!" shouted Townsend. "For goodness' sake, go it, Smythey!"

Smythe flushed as he heard the laughter and muttered remarks of the ring. He screwed up his courage, what little he had, and made a desperate attack. There were loud cheers from the nuts as he hurled himself upon Rawson, and the latter was compelled to give ground.

"Bravo! Go it!"

Smythe was going it now, hot and strong. Rawson had to retreat, and he received some punishment.

Smythe felt his courage revive, and he pressed his antagonist harder and harder. But it was only for a minute.

A feint of Rawson's right drew Adolphus, and then his left came out with a shoulder drive that there was nothing to stop.

Full in Smythe's flushed face the hard glove landed, with all Rawson's force and weight behind it.

Crash!

Adolphus was on his back, blinking. Tommy Dodd began to count. But "Time!" saved Adolphus from being counted out. Townsend lifted him, and helped him out.

"Grooogh-ohh!" said Smythe dazedly.

"You'll nail him next time!" said Townsend.

"Time!" grinned Tommy Dodd.

Slowly and heavily Smythe of the Shell toed the line again. Rawson stepped up smiling. The nuts watched anxiously. Rawson was attacking now, and Adolphus was driven round the ring under a shower of blows.

"Yow! Ow, ow!" roared Adolphus, as a series of sharp taps came on his eyes, nose, and chin.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a yell of surprise and merriment. Adolphus, confused and

considerably hurt by those sharp taps, had turned and run!

Rawson stood in astonishment.

The unfortunate Adolphus fairly bolted from the ring.

There was a roar of inextinguishable laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Even the nuts were laughing. They could not help it. Without even stopping for his jacket, Adolphus fled.

"By gad!" gasped Townsend.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Rawson grinned.

"I suppose that's the finish?" he remarked.

"Ha, ha! I suppose so!" chuckled Jimmy Silver. "Here's your jacket, old scout. Ha, ha, ha! Oh, Adolphus!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The crowd broke up, yelling with laughter. In his study, Adolphus Smythe was gasping for breath and groaning over his damages, and his ears burned as he heard the shouts of merriment from the quadrangle.

The mighty had fallen!

For days afterwards Adolphus could not show his face in public without provoking chuckles and humorous remarks. And Townsend & Co., furious as they were, had reluctantly to admit that their wisest plan was to give a wide, safe berth to the junior who had succeeded so well in keeping his end up.

CHAPTER 24.

Jimmy Silver Is Wanted!

"SILVER!"

Mr. Bootles, the master of the Fourth, opened his study door, and called to Jimmy Silver. Jimmy, who was going out, stopped at once.

"Yes, sir."

Jimmy came back along the passage in some dismay. He was going down to football, and it was a very awkward moment for being called "on the carpet." He wondered whether he was to be lectured for the last row with the



There was a terrific but brief struggle in the study, and then Rawson sent the nuts of the Fourth flying out into the passage one by one. Townsend was the last to go, and he whirled through the doorway to land on his fallen friends.

"Bravo!" yelled Jimmy Silver.

Moderns, or called over the coals for licking Smythe of the Shell, or given lines for catching Knowles of the Sixth—quite accidentally—with a football. With all these sins on his youthful conscience, the last person he wished to interview was his Form-master.

"You are—ahem!—disengaged this afternoon? What—what?" said Mr. Bootles, in his slow, ponderous manner.

"I'm going down to football, sir."

"I should like you to perform a little service for me, Silver."

"Yes, sir," said Jimmy, relieved to find that it was not a "wiggling," and at the same time worried over the prospects of football for the afternoon.

"However, if you are playing a some match important to you, I will find someone else," said Mr. Bootles, always a considerate gentleman.

"Not at all, sir," said Jimmy, with manly frankness. "It's only practice."

"Very good. I should prefer you to go, as you are head boy in the Fourth Form, Silver."

"Yes, sir."

"There is a new boy coming to Rookwood this afternoon, who will be on the Classical side, and in your Form," said Mr. Bootles. "I have arranged for him to be met at the station. I should be glad if you would go, Silver, and bring him to Rookwood."

"Very well, sir."

"Lord Mornington will arrive at Coombe by the three o'clock train. Will you make it a point, Silver, to meet the train, and conduct him to Rookwood?"

"Lord Mornington, sir!" repeated Jimmy, somewhat interested.

"Yes. You will bring the new boy to my study, Silver."

"Yes, sir."

Mr. Bootles stepped back into his study, and Jimmy Silver went out into the quadrangle not very cheerfully. Football for the afternoon was knocked on the head. But it could not be helped, and Jimmy, too, was an oblig-

ing fellow. Lovell and Raby and Newcome bore down on him in the quad.

"Waiting for you, duffer!" said Lovell. "Where the dickens have you been?"

"Footer's off," said Jimmy dismally. "I've got to go out."

"What on earth for?" demanded Raby. "We've got a match with St. Jim's coming on soon, and you're not going to cut practice."

"New kid coming."

"Blow the new kid!"

"I'm to meet him at the station—"

"What rot! Can't he get here by himself?"

"Bootles has asked me."

"Oh, bother Bootles!" said Lovell warmly. "What is there special about this blessed new kid?"

"Well, he's a lord," said Jimmy Silver. "Lord Mornington of that ilk."

"Ask Townsend to go instead. He's fond of lords," said Lovell. "Towny would walk ten miles to have his nose punched by a lord. And he doesn't play footer! Hi, Towny! Towny, you're wanted!"

Townsend, the dandy of the Fourth, sauntered up elegantly.

"Yaas, deah boy?" he said.

"There's a duke coming to Rookwood this afternoon," said Lovell. "Did you say a duke or a marquis, Jimmy?"

"A lord, fathead!" said Jimmy, laughing.

"By gad!" said Townsend. "What's his name?"

"Lord Mornington de Mornington de Plantagenet," said Lovell. "Quite in your line, Towny. Will you go and meet him instead of Jimmy Silver? Jimmy isn't gone on lords, and we want him to play footer!"

"Yaas, by gad!" said Townsend. "I'll go with pleasure."

"There you are, Jimmy," said Lovell, with satisfaction. "Now come down to the footer."

Jimmy Silver shook his head.

"I've got to go—Bootles asked me."

"Look here, Towny's more used to lords than you are," said Lovell wrath-

fully. "You shut up, and come down to the footer."

"Can't be did! Bootles——"

"Blow Bootles! Cut off, Towny, and look after that lord. You're coming down to the footer, Jimmy Silver."

"Look here!"

"Rats!"

Lovell linked arms with the captain of the Fourth. Raby took his other arm. Newcome gave him a prod in the back, and Jimmy gave a yell.

"I tell you——"

"Kim on!"

Jimmy Silver resisted, but his chums marched him down to the football field.

It was a case of force majeure.

"You silly asses!" shouted Jimmy Silver. "I tell you I've got to go! You can come with me."

"You're going to play football," said Lovell determinedly. "We're not going to let St. Jim's beat us next week because you're fond of lords."

"It isn't that, you ass! But Bootles——"

"Don't be a tittle-hunter, Jimmy," said Raby.

"You frabjous duffer, it isn't that. It's Bootles——"

"Hallo! What's the row?" asked Dick Oswald, as they arrived on Little Side.

"Only Jimmy playing the giddy ox. He wants to cut footer and go after a lord," said Lovell. "We're not letting him."

"I don't!" roared Jimmy. "Only I've got to."

"Waiting for you," said Tommy Dodd.

Jimmy Silver breathed hard through his nose. It really required an effort to leave the football field, apart from the solicitude of his chums. But he had to go. However, he went on to the field.

"That's better!" said Lovell. "You can see the lord any time, you know."

Jimmy Silver did not reply.

He received the ball from Tommy Dodd, and kicked it away, and his chums ran after it. Jimmy Silver ran

at the same time, making for the gates.

"He's off!" yelled Newcome.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"After him!" roared Lovell.

The three juniors broke into a hot chase after Jimmy Silver, leaving the footballers shouting with laughter. Jimmy reached the school gates, with his chums racing in pursuit. But Jimmy was a good sprinter, and he kept well ahead. He darted through the gateway, and went along the road like a deer in the direction of Coombe.

"Oh, the rotter!" gasped Lovell. "Keep on! We'll run him down and bump him baldheaded."

Jimmy Silver trotted on, carefully keeping a dozen yards ahead. Half-way to Coombe he looked back over his shoulder. His three chums were panting on behind, and Lovell was shaking a wrathful fist.

"You wait till I get hold of you!" bellowed Lovell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You cackling dummy——"

Jimmy Silver sprinted on again. He reached the little village, and ran on to the railway station. His chums arrived there, panting, a few minutes after him. Jimmy had gone on to the platform. The train was hardly due yet, and he had ample time to fulfil his mission.

Lovell and Raby and Newcome glared at him through the barrier. Jimmy Silver smiled back at them.

"Make it pax!" he suggested. "I couldn't refuse Bootles, you know. Make it pax, and I'll stand you some chocs."

"You cheeky ass——"

"You can't row here," urged Jimmy. "Remember your manners in public, Lovell, old chap. I had to come. Come on and have some chocs."

And the Co. decided to accept the invitation, and they devoted their attention to the automatic machine on the platform while they waited for the train. By the time the train came in harmony was quite restored among the Fistical Four of Rookwood.

CHAPTER 25.

A Very Surprising New Boy!

JIMMY SILVER & CO. suspended their operations on the chocolates as the train stopped in the station. They did not know Lord Mornington by sight, of course, but they expected to be able to pick him out easily enough.

A number of passengers alighted and went towards the exit, but there was no boy among them. Jimmy's eyes fell upon a man in mutton-chop whiskers, who alighted from a third-class carriage, and came along the train to a first-class compartment, and opened the door.

"Coombe, my lord!"

"Is this the station, Jenkins?"

"Yes, my lord."

"Take care of Beauty."

"Yes, my lord."

The valet, for such he evidently was, lifted a bull-pup from the carriage.

Beauty was apparently the name of the pup, but he was not a beauty to look at. The Rookwood juniors thought they had never seen so ugly and savage-looking a brute. A lad of about their own age stepped from the carriage, yawned, and glanced about him. It was evident that this was his lordship.

He was a slim fellow, with a somewhat seedy-looking face, and heavy eyes. He was not in Etons, but dressed in lounge clothes of a very fashionable cut. He wore a diamond ring, a diamond pin, and a gold watch. A cigarette was between his fingers.

"What a hole!" remarked this interesting young person, with a disparaging glance about him.

"Yes, my lord," said the obsequious Jenkins.

"Look after the luggage, Jenkins!"

"Yes, my lord."

"Find me a taxi!"

"Yes, my lord."

Jimmy Silver & Co. looked at one another and grinned. Jenkins was likely to have a difficult task before him to find a taxicab in Coombe. The only conveyance in that quiet village was a hack.

"Well, if that's the lord," said Lovell, "I don't think much of him. The beast has been smoking."

"I've got to take him to Bootles," said Jimmy Silver. "Here goes!"

The valet had gone along the train to look after the luggage, of which there seemed to be an endless quantity. His lordship lighted a fresh cigarette, and looked about him discontentedly. He stared at Jimmy Silver far from civilly as the Rookwood junior came up.

"Lord Mornington?" asked Jimmy.

A cool nod.

"I'm Silver of the Fourth, at Rookwood," explained Jimmy.

"Are you, by Jove?"

"Mr. Bootles has sent me to meet you and take you to the school."

"Who may Mr. Bootles be?"

"Master of the Fourth."

"Thanks!"

"You won't get a taxicab here," said Jimmy. "There's an old one-horse cab at the station. It's more comfy to walk."

"Oh, gad! What a hole!"

"What's the matter with walking?" demanded Lovell.

The new boy stared at him.

"Did you address me?" he asked.

"Yes, I did."

"Then don't!"

"Wha-a-at!"

Lord Mornington turned away.

"Jenkins!"

"Yes, my lord."

"Never mind the luggage. Find me a car!"

"Yes, my lord."

"And don't keep me waitin', you fool!"

"No, my lord."

Lovell breathed hard. Everything about the new boy put his "back up" at once.

For a boy of fifteen to call a man old enough to be his father a "fool" was a sign as much of a bad heart as bad manners. It was pretty certain that Jenkins' place was worth a great deal to him to make him willing to endure such insolence.

"If that thing comes into the Fourth, it will find trouble," said Lovell.

"What price bumping some of the impudence out of him now, to start with?" suggested Raby.

"Good egg!"

"Hold on!" said Jimmy Silver. "Lots of time for that at Rookwood. I've promised Bootles to deliver him safe and sound."

The new boy took no further notice of the Rookwood fellows. He lounged away to the gate, and passed through, followed by the obsequious Jenkins.

Jimmy Silver & Co. followed, the Co. looking grim, and Jimmy looking—and feeling—puzzled. This peculiar new boy was quite a surprise to him. He did not quite see how he was to deliver Lord Mornington to Mr. Bootles, in the circumstances.

Only his sense of duty prevented him from walking off at once, and leaving the new boy to his own devices.

Outside the station was the ancient hack which had done duty for generations, with a horse which looked as if it had done duty for still more generations.

The driver detached himself from the station wall, removed a straw from his mouth, and touched his hat to the well-dressed stranger.

"Ack, sir?"

His lordship looked at the hack, looked at the wheezy old driver, and turned his back without a word.

"Jenkins!"

"Yes, my lord."

"I don't like waitin' here. Find me a car!"

Mr. Jenkins rubbed his nose in a perplexed way. It was plain enough that nothing in the shape of a car could be found in the village of Coombe.

"I'm afraid it can't be done, my lord," said Mr. Jenkins at last.

"Then how am I to get to the school?" demanded his lordship angrily.

"There's the 'ack, my lord," said Mr. Jenkins doubtfully.

"Fool!"

"Yes, my lord."

"Look here, I've kicked my heels here

long enough!" burst out Lovell. "Are you bringing that young cub along, or are we going without him, Jimmy Silver?"

"We can't go without him," said Jimmy. "I've got to deliver him in Bootles' study."

"Then take him by the ears and yank him along!"

Jimmy approached his lordship again.

"Hadn't you better walk?" he asked.

"Don't bother me!"

"Mr. Bootles directed me to bring you to the school, and I'm bound to do it," said Jimmy. "You mayn't be aware that I've chucked football this afternoon to come here and meet you. Will you take the hack or walk? You can choose!"

"Neither!"

"It's one or the other. Make up your mind!"

Lord Mornington stared at him.

"Are you presumin' to interfere with me?" he exclaimed.

Jimmy Silver nodded cheerfully.

"Exactly!"

Mr. Jenkins concealed a grin behind his hand. It was probably refreshing to him to hear his lordship talked to in this manner.

"By Jove! You impudent young scoundrel!" ejaculated his lordship.

"What are you calling me?" asked Jimmy, with dangerous calm.

"Impudent young scoundrel!" shouted Mornington. "Get away, or I'll lay my cane about you!"

"Your cane about me?" said Jimmy Silver dazedly.

"Biff him, Jimmy, you fathead!" shouted Lovell.

Jimmy set his teeth.

"That settles it!" he said. "You're coming. I'd have gone in that stuffy hack with you to oblige; now you'll oblige me. You'll walk. Come on!"

"Stand back!"

"Are you coming," said Jimmy, in concentrated tones, "or do you want to be led by the ear?"

"By Jove!"

"I give you one minute to choose!"

Lord Mornington turned to his servant. His pasty face was purple with rage now.

"Jenkins!" he gasped.

"Yes, my lord."

"Chastise that impertinent young scoundrell!"

CHAPTER 26.

Follow Your Leader!

JENKINS looked at Jimmy Silver.

Jimmy Silver looked at Jenkins. The unhappy manservant seemed loth to begin.

Lord Mornington glared at him as if he would eat him.

"Do you hear me, Jenkins?" he shouted.

"Yes, my lord!" stammered Jenkins.

"Then do as you're told, you fool!"

"Come on!" said Jimmy Silver invitingly. "I'm waiting to be chastised—yearning for it!"

"Take this cane, and thrash him," said his lordship.

Jenkins unwillingly took the cane, and made a step towards Jimmy Silver. The Rookwood fellows were rooted to the ground with astonishment for a moment or two. Then there was a roar of wrath from Lovell.

"Collar him!"

The Co. rushed at Jenkins.

Three pairs of hands were laid upon the manservant, and he was whirled off his feet in the twinkling of an eye.

"Oh—oh! Yah! Leggo!" howled Jenkins, as he was whirled in the air, with his brains swimming and all Coombe swimming round his eyes.

"Into the puddle there!" said Lovell.

Jenkins was rushed into the road towards a large puddle left by recent rain. The hack-driver burst into a guffaw; the old porter looked out of the station, chuckling. Half a dozen village urchins gathered round, highly interested.

Jenkins struggled wildly, his arms and legs flying in the air. But the fat manservant had no chance in the grasp of the three sturdy juniors.

Lord Mornington rushed forward furiously, and Jimmy put out his foot, and his lordship sprawled on the pavement.

"Haw, haw, haw!"

"Oh, by gad!"

Splash!

Down went Jenkins into the puddle, with shocking results to his livery.

He sat there and roared. Lovell picked up the cane that had fallen from his hand, broke it across his knee, and tossed the pieces to a distance.

Then he returned to the pavement.

"Is that cub coming with us?" he demanded, panting.

"Got to," said Jimmy Silver.

"Then we'll take him."

Lord Mornington was staggering up, thoroughly enraged and in a dazed state. The bull-pup was growling and seemed inclined to begin on the juniors.

Lovell pushed it aside with his foot, and seized Lord Mornington by the ear.

By that appendage his lordship was jerked to his feet, yelling.

"Come on!" said Lovell. "You're coming to Rookwood!"

The new boy struck furiously at his face.

Lovell guarded the blow, and seized Mornington's wrists.

"Take a hold, Jimmy!"

Jimmy took one wrist, Lovell the other.

"Now come on!"

"I won't!" yelled his lordship. "Let go! Scoundrels! Jenkins, you fool, come and help me! Call the police!"

Jenkins scrambled out of the puddle. He seemed undecided what to do; but Raby and Newcome decided for him by rolling him into the puddle again.

Lord Mornington was marched away down the street, struggling to release his hands. Raby and Newcome brought up the rear, leaving the unhappy Jenkins trying to collect his scattered senses.

A little crowd of village urchins followed, laughing and yelling.

The new boy panted with rage.

"Will you let me go, you rotters?" he shouted.

"Not to-day," said Jimmy cheerily.

"Some other time," grinned Lovell.

"How dare you touch me, you low cads!"

"Orders to deliver you to Bootles."

"Hang Bootles!"

"You can hang him if you like when you get to him. You're going to him now, whether you like it or not!"

"And if you don't go quietly we'll get a rope and tie you up!" shouted Lovell.

"Let me go, you cads!"

"Raby, cut into Jones', and get a cord," said Lovell.

"Right-ho!"

Raby ran into the shop, and reappeared in a few moments with a coil of cord. Lord Mornington, still resisting, was run out of the village street into the lane. There Lovell dragged his wrists together, and knotted the cord on them.

"Now you'll come on," he said.

"I won't!"

"All hands!" said Jimmy Silver.

The Fistical Four all grasped the rope, and set off at a good pace towards Rookwood School. The new boy backed away, exerting all his strength to resist the pull. But he resisted in vain; the four were too strong for him, and he was dragged over, and rolled in the road.

The Fistical Four did not stop. They marched on, and Lord Mornington rolled and scrambled along the road after them.

He scrambled to his feet at last, and ran to keep pace. He had had enough of being dragged.

"Will you let me go?" he shrieked.

"No fear. You're coming to Rookwood."

"Hang you!"

"Nice boy! Will you come quietly if we let you go?"

"No!" yelled Mornington.

"Then come on!"

The new boy rushed closer, and began to kick. The Fistical Four broke into a run, laughing merrily. The cord was kept taut between them, and all the

way to Rookwood they kept up the run, with his lordship panting behind. Such was the manner of Lord Mornington's arrival at Rookwood!

CHAPTER 27.

His Lordship Arrives!

"By gad!"

"What the merry dickens!"

"What larks!"

Smythe & Co., the nuts of Rookwood, were gathered at the gates. Townsend had spread the story of the expected arrival of the nobleman, and the nuts were extremely anxious to make his acquaintance. Smythe & Co. were an extremely high-class and select circle, but they did not yet include a nobleman in their ranks. They were prepared to "go all out" to gain Lord Mornington as a member of the "Giddy Goats."

They were expecting Lord Mornington to arrive; but they were not expecting him to arrive like this. As Jimmy Silver & Co. appeared on the road, with their led captive, the nuts stared in amazement.

"That can't be the lord, by gad!" said Adolphus Smythe. "Who is it?"

"Not easy to see for mud!" grinned Townsend.

"What a lark!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Fistical Four came cheerfully in at the gates, with his lordship panting behind, streaming with perspiration, and smothered with mud.

"Who is it?" yelled Topham.

Jimmy Silver grinned.

"Lord Mornington," he replied.

"What!"

"You—you're treating a lord like that!" gasped Smythe.

"Looks like it, doesn't it?"

"Why, you cheeky rotters——"

"Let him go!"

"Help!" shouted Lord Mornington.

"Help me!"

Smythe & Co. exchanged glances, and gathered round threateningly. Their

natty blood almost ran cold at the sight of a titled person being treated in this disrespectful manner. And it occurred to them that they could not better pay their court to his lordship than by rescuing him from the hands of the Fistical Four.

"Back up!" shouted Smythe. "Collar those young cads!"

"Let his lordship go at once!"

"Come on!" said Jimmy Silver.

There were seven or eight of the nuts, and they felt strong in numbers. But the Fistical Four did not care for their numbers. They charged right at Smythe & Co, and the weedy nuts were knocked right and left.

"By gad!"

"Yaroooh!"

"Oh, my hat!"

The Fistical Four were through, and they marched on to the School House, leaving Smythe & Co. in an exceedingly demoralised state. Fellows gathered round from all sides, and came running from the football field to behold the strange sight.

Lord Mornington, crimson, hatless, and furious, was marched on to the School House, where Mr. Bootles, astounded, caught sight of the procession from his study window.

The Fourth Form master threw up his window at once.

"Silver!" he ejaculated.

The procession halted.

"Yes, sir," said Jimmy, raising his cap.

"What does this extraordinary scene mean?"

"We've brought him, sir."

"Who—who is that?"

"Lord Mornington, sir."

"What—what does this mean? How dare you treat a new boy in this fashion?" thundered Mr. Bootles.

"Your orders, sir," said Jimmy.

"My—my orders!"

"Certainly, sir. You told me to bring Lord Mornington to your study. He wouldn't come, so we had to persuade him."

"Persuade him!" gasped Mr. Bootles.

"Is that what you call persuasion, Silver?"

"It was the only way, sir."

"Silver, you—you must be perfectly aware that I did not mean you to use violence towards the new boy!" gasped Mr. Bootles.

"I felt that I had to bring him, sir, as you had told me to," said Jimmy Silver. "We couldn't carry him, sir, so we had to lead him home."

"Extraordinary! Mornington, why did you not come quietly with the lad I sent to meet you?"

"I refused to do anything of the sort. I would not take a step with the scoundrel!" shouted the new boy.

"What—what!"

"I demand to see these four young villains flogged at once! Otherwise I will not remain in the school."

"What—what!" said Mr. Bootles feebly.

"My dog has been lost. My hat has been lost. I have been treated in a ruffianly manner. They must be punished at once!"

"That is not the way to speak to your Form-master, Mornington. Silver, release that boy at once. Come to my study, Mornington!" Mr. Bootles, very ruffled, snapped the window shut.

Jimmy Silver untied his lordship. The first use Lord Mornington made of his freedom was to dash a blow at Jimmy's smiling face.

The captain of the Fourth knocked his hand aside.

"Get indoors!" he said.

"Don't you speak to me, you cad!"

"Are you going?"

"No, hang you!"

"You heard Mr. Bootles tell you to go to his study."

"I shall please myself about that."

"You won't!" said Jimmy Silver grimly, and he grasped the new boy by the collar and ran him forcibly up the steps of the House.

His lordship was run into the hall, resisting vainly, and they arrived breathless at the Form-master's door.

Jimmy Silver tapped with his free hand.

"Come in!"

Jimmy opened the door and pushed Lord Mornington in. He closed the door and withdrew, breathing a little hard, but smiling.

"What sort of a wild animal is it?" exclaimed Tommy Dodd as Jimmy rejoined his chums in the quadrangle.

Jimmy Silver laughed.

"The queerest animal that's ever come to Rookwood," he said. "I can foresee a high old time for that merchant in the Fourth."

"You're welcome to him on the Classical side," grinned Tommy Dodd. "Jolly glad he isn't going to be a Modern."

"The Modern side's the place for such a rotter!" growled Lovell. "He's got a bulldog and a manservant, and the manners of a pig!"

"A manservant! Here?" exclaimed a dozen voices.

"Well, we left him sorting himself out of a puddle in Coombe, but he's coming."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Still time for some footer," said Jimmy Silver. "We've done our giddy duty; done it well, too. Come on, ye cripples!"

The chums of the Fourth went down to Little Side, leaving his lordship to be dealt with by Mr. Bootles. Football occupied their thoughts until tea-time, and they forgot all about his peculiar lordship. But they were destined to be reminded of him.

CHAPTER 28.

Flynn Loses His Temper!

LORD MORNINGTON stood before Mr. Bootles' writing-table, gasping for breath. Mr. Bootles gazed at him across the table, very near gasping himself. Mr. Bootles knew some circumstances in his lordship's history with which the Rook-

wood juniors were unacquainted. He had not expected him to appear quite like an ordinary new boy. But he had never dreamed that he would be quite so unusual.

"Ahem—ahem!" said Mr. Bootles. "My dear Mornington—ahem! You are very muddy. What—what!"

"Are those boys going to be punished?" asked the new junior, his voice trembling with rage.

"It appears that you refused to accompany Silver here. I had directed him to bring you," said Mr. Bootles mildly. "Why did you refuse?"

"I did not choose."

"Ahem—ahem! Pray calm yourself, Mornington. Your guardian has very wisely decided to send you here, and you must learn discipline in this school. You must, first of all, address your master more respectfully."

"Are they to be punished? I ordered my servant to punish them, and they threw him into a puddle."

Mr. Bootles jumped.

"You—you ordered your servant to punish Rookwood boys?" he said.

"Yes, certainly!"

"You impertinent young rascal!" exclaimed Mr. Bootles, really angry now. "I am not surprised that Silver lost patience with you. You may go and make yourself tidy now, and I will speak to you later." Mr. Bootles rose and opened the door. "Flynn!"

"Yes, sorr!" Flynn of the Fourth was passing, and he came at Mr. Bootles' call.

"Please take the new boy to the dormitory, Flynn. Then show him to the Fourth Form passage; to No. 2 Study, which he will occupy."

"Yes, sorr," said Flynn.

Mr. Bootles stepped back into his study, breathing hard. He could foresee a troublesome time for Lord Mornington and for himself. His lordship had been allowed to run wild by a careless guardian for years, and the result was not pleasant. It was evident that the boy had always had

his own way among his dependents, that he had grown up self-willed and passionate-tempered, utterly inconsiderate of others, and selfish to the last degree. The guardian, awakening to a sense of his responsibility at last, had washed his hands of him by sending him to Rookwood. It was, perhaps, the wisest step he could have taken; but his lordship had painful lessons to learn, and did not seem in the least in a mood for learning them.

Flynn looked at him very curiously. He had seen his lordship's arrival. But the Irish junior was good-natured, and prepared to look after the new fellow kindly enough.

"This way, kid," he said, and Lord Mornington followed him to the Fourth Form dormitory. "You can get a wash here, and faith, you need it, and I'll find a clothes-brush to lend you."

Lord Mornington threw his jacket on a bed.

He waited for Flynn to pour the water into the basin for that much-needed wash.

"And I'll take you to your study, if you'll buck up," said Flynn.

He sorted a clothes-brush out of his own box.

"Here you are."

"Brush me down," said Lord Mornington.

"Oh, all right!"

The request might have been made more civilly; Flynn did not suspect that it was not a request, but an order. He good-naturedly brushed down his lordship's trousers.

"Now my boots; they are muddy."

"Sure I can't use me clothes-brush on your boots, intirely!"

"Nonsense!"

"Phwat?"

"My boots need brushin', and my servant is not here. Brush my jacket first, as it will make the brush dirty."

Flynn looked steadily at the newcomer. He began to understand.

"Is it giving me orders ye are?" he asked.

"Certainly!"

Flynn put his brush back into the box, and turned to the door. He had a quick temper, but he did not want to hammer a new kid so soon after his arrival.

"Where are you going?" shouted his lordship.

"Sure I'm going down."

"Stay here!"

Flynn grinned, and went out of the dormitory. Mornington's face flushed with rage, and he caught up a cake of soap from the wash-basin, and hurled it after the Irish junior with all the force of his arm.

The missile caught Flynn on the back of the head. Flynn uttered a yell and spun round.

"Phwat — phwat was that? Yaroooh!"

"Now do as I tell you, you fool!"

Patrick O'Donovan Flynn gave Lord Mornington one look. Then he rushed at him. Right and left his hands came out, clenched hard, and his lordship was knocked sprawling over a bed.

"Now thin, ye spalpeen," panted Flynn—"now get up and give me some more orders, begorra!"

Lord Mornington scrambled off the bed. He did not seem to want for courage of a wild-cat kind. He made a furious spring at Flynn, clutching at him savagely.

Biff!

Flynn's right caught the new boy on the chin, and he went with a crash to the floor.

There he lay, gasping. Flynn gave him a look, and walked out of the dormitory. As he ascended the stairs he caught sight of a fat man in livery entering the House, with a bull-pup under his arm. The man spoke to him very civilly as he came down into the lower hall.

"Excuse me, sir. Can you tell me if Lord Mornington has arrived?"

Flynn grinned.

"Sure he has, and who may you be?"

"I am his lordship's valet, sir."

"Howly mother av Moses! A valet to a kid in the Fourth!" chortled Flynn. "Oh, this is too rich intoirly! Ye'll find him in the dorm, nursing his chin. Come on, I'll show ye the way."

Flynn pointed out the Fourth Form dormitory, and then hurried out to report, with many chuckles, to the Rookwood fellows that his lordship's valet had arrived.

Mr. Jenkins went into the dormitory, and found his lordship sitting on a bed and rubbing his chin, his brow black as thunder.

"So you've got here, you fool!" snarled his lordship.

"Yes, my lord."

And Mr. Jenkins set to work brushing and renovating his lordship, encouraged by an incessant string of abuse from the estimable young gentleman.

CHAPTER 29.

His Lordship Makes Himself at Home!

"GREAT Scott!"

The Fistical Four uttered that exclamation in a kind of chorus.

Football was over, and the Classical chums had come in to tea. As they came down the passage towards the end study they were astounded. Outside the study stood a pile of furniture.

Most of the "household goods" of the Fistical Four were stacked there—the bookcase, several boxes, the pictures, the desks, some of the chairs, and other articles.

They could scarcely believe their eyes.

"A blessed Modern raid!" howled Lovell. "We'll make Tommy Dodd sit up for this!"

"There's somebody in the study now," said Raby.

"Caught in the act! Come on!"

The juniors rushed on, fully expecting to find Modern raiders in the study. But no Moderns were visible. It was not a raid from the rival party of Rookwood.

Lord Mornington and Jenkins were in the study. Beauty, the bull-pup, was also there, reposing in the arm-chair. The "removal" was evidently the work of the new arrival.

"What does this mean?" shouted Jimmy Silver.

Mornington looked round.

"Get out!" he said.

"Get out!" repeated Jimmy dazedly.

"Get out of my own study!"

His lordship uttered an impatient exclamation.

"Was this your study?"

"Was it? It was—and is."

"I want it."

"He wants it!" said Lovell sulphurously. "He wants it! Did you ever hear such a cheeky cub?"

"It is the best study in the passage," said Mornington. "It has two windows—it is not so poky as the others. I shall have it. I have turned out all that rubbish, as I shall furnish the study to my own taste. I shall require another room for my servant."

"Do you think you'll be allowed to keep a servant here?" demanded Raby.

"I shall insist upon that."

"As soon as Bootles sees him he'll be sent off with a flea in his ear," howled Newcome.

"Nonsense!"

Lord Mornington turned his back on the Fistical Four.

"Take that glass down, Jenkins!" he said. "That is no use to me. Throw those wretched vases into the passage."

"Yes, my lord."

"Lay a finger on that glass, and I'll squash you!" bellowed Lovell, striding furiously into the study.

Jenkins hesitated.

"Look here," said his lordship angrily, "I don't want any interference

from you. I have taken this study, and shall keep it. I don't want you to give it up for nothin', however. How much do you want?"

"Eh? How much what?"

"Money, of course."

Lord Mornington took out a wallet and opened it. A wad of banknotes was revealed to the amazed eyes of the Rookwood juniors.

There were at least six or seven fivers, as well as a whole chunk of one-pound notes. His lordship did not want for ready cash. He had a good deal more money than all the rest of the Fourth Form at Rookwood put together; and with such a supply he was pretty certain to make friends in the school—of a sort. Jimmy Silver & Co. were not of that sort, however.

"Put your silly money away," said Jimmy contemptuously.

"How much do you want? I will give you five pounds."

"Oh, shut up!"

"Bah! Ten pounds if you like," said Mornington arrogantly.

"Kick him out," said Lovell.

Mornington shrugged his shoulders, and put the wallet back into his pocket.

"Very well, please yourselves," he said. "But I keep this study. Jenkins, throw those young ruffians into the passage."

"Throw us into the passage—out of our own study!" gasped Lovell. "Pinch me, somebody! I know I must be dreaming."

"Do you hear me, Jenkins, you confounded fool?"

"Yes, my lord!" faltered Jenkins.

"Then do as I tell you."

Jenkins blinked doubtfully at the Fistical Four. They settled the matter for him by taking him by the shoulders and spinning him out of the study. Jenkins collapsed into the passage, and lay there gasping.

"Now, you young cad," said Lovell, "put that furniture back into the room."

"Nonsense!"

"Are you going to do as you're told?"

"Certainly not!"

"Then you'll be licked until you do. Put him across the table, you fellows," said Lovell. "I'll teach the cub manners with a cricket-stump!"

"Hands off!" roared his lordship furiously.

Jimmy Silver and Raby grasped him and threw him face downwards across the table and held him there. They were fed-up with his insolence, and they felt that it was time he had a lesson.

Lovell picked up a cricket-stump and swung it in the air.

Whack, whack, whack!

"Yow-ow-ow!" shrieked his lordship, writhing and wriggling under the lashes. "Help! Jenkins, you fool, come here! Help!"

Jenkins blinked in at the doorway. Newcome flourished a stump under his fat nose, and Jenkins promptly retreated again.

Lovell went on with the castigation. It was probably the first thrashing Lord Mornington had received in his life, though certainly not the first one he had needed.

Whack, whack, whack!

Wild yells proceeded from the wriggling new boy.

His yells rang along the passage, and brought other fellows to the spot. Most of the Classical Fourth were coming in to tea, and they gathered in a crowd outside the study, and looked on, grinning.

"Now will you put the furniture back?" asked Lovell, pausing to take breath.

"No!" shrieked his lordship.

Whack, whack, whack!

"Ow! Yow! Help!"

Whack, whack, whack!

"Sure, it's a good carpet-beater ye'd make, Lovell," said Flynn. "Moind ye don't break the stump on him intirely."

Whack, whack, whack!

"Now will you do as you're told?"

"No!" yelled Mornington.

"Cave!" called out Oswald. "Here comes Bulkeley!"

"Let him come," growled Lovell, and he whacked away with the cricket-stump, to an accompaniment of fiendish yells from his lordship.

"What the thunder's all this row?" exclaimed Bulkeley of the Sixth, looking in angrily. "Lovell—what—"

"I'm thrashing a cad, Bulkeley," said Lovell, lowering the stump. "He's asked for it. It's all right."

"Let him go at once!" exclaimed the prefect. "Is that Lord Mornington? How dare you treat a new boy like this?"

"He's shifted our furniture out of the study, and he won't put it back," growled Lovell.

His lordship slid off the table, and stood trembling in every limb, his eyes blazing with passion.

"Mornington, what have you interfered with this study for?" said Bulkeley.

"I have taken this study for myself."

"What! Did Mr. Bootles tell you to do so?"

"No."

"Then what do you mean?" demanded Bulkeley.

"I have chosen this study."

"Is the fellow mad?" exclaimed the captain of Rookwood, in amazement.

"Do you suppose that you will be allowed to do anything of the sort, Mornington?"

"I shall please myself."

"You don't quite know whom you are talking to, I think," said Bulkeley very quietly.

"I don't know, by Jove, and I don't care!"

"I am the captain of the school, and head prefect."

"I don't care what you are."

"Don't you? I think you'll learn to care in time," said the Sixth Former grimly.

"Put back the things you have moved out of this study at once!"

"I won't!"

"Shall I put them back, my lord?" ventured Mr. Jenkins, peering over Bulkeley's broad shoulders into the study.

"No!" screamed his lordship.

"Who are you?" ejaculated Bulkeley, staring at the fat manservant.

"His lordship's valet, sir."

"You have brought a valet with you to school, Mornington!" exclaimed the Rookwood captain. "I think you must be out of your senses. The man must be sent away at once."

"I will not send him away."

"You will come with me," said Bulkeley, taking his lordship by the collar. "You come, too, my man."

"I won't come!" yelled his lordship.

Bulkeley did not reply to that. With a grasp of iron on Mornington's collar, he swung him out of the study and marched him along the passage. Mr. Jenkins followed, with an impassive face.

Jimmy Silver whistled.

"Rather a surprise-packet, that merchant," he remarked. "Looks as if we've got to do our moving job ourselves. Still, I don't think he'll shift our furniture any more after this."

The Fistical Four proceeded to put their study to rights. It was not likely, indeed, that his lordship would invade the end study again. The Fistical Four were rather too tough a nut for the noble youth to crack.

CHAPTER 30.

His Lordship Finds Friends!

MR. BOOTLES looked worried as Lord Mornington was marched into his study with Bulkeley's grip on his collar, Mr. Jenkins bringing up the rear.

"What is the matter, what—what?" said Mr. Bootles, laying down his pen.

"Mornington appears to have brought a manservant with him to school, sir," said the prefect dryly. "I thought you had better deal with him."

"Bless my soul!"

Bulkeley released Mornington's collar, and the estimable youth gave him a glance of hatred.

"Mornington, is it possible that you have been so foolish?" exclaimed the master of the Fourth.

"I have certainly brought my servant here," said his lordship haughtily. "The man is a blockhead, but I need him. I suppose I am not expected to live here without a servant?"

"You cannot keep a servant here," said Mr. Bootles, with laborious patience. "He must be sent away at once. Is this the man? My man, you cannot remain at Rookwood. You must leave immediately."

"He cannot leave," said Lord Mornington. "I require his services."

"Hold your tongue, boy. My man, you will leave immediately, do you hear?"

"I will not allow it!" shouted his lordship.

"Mornington, if you utter another insolent word I shall cane you!" said Mr. Bootles, out of patience at last.

"I will not have my servant sent away. I require him. Who is to brush my clothes if Jenkins is sent away?"

"Rookwood boys brush their clothes themselves, Mornington."

"I shall do nothing of the kind."

"Dear me!" said Mr. Bootles.

"I shall write to my guardian at once," said Mornington. "He is a governor of this school, and he will see that I am treated with proper respect here. I do not intend to endure any impertinence, even from masters."

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Bulkeley. Mr. Bootles' face was a study.

"Bulkeley," said Mr. Bootles at last, "will you oblige me by seeing Lord Mornington's servant off the premises? You may leave this boy to me."

"Certainly, sir."

"Jenkins, you are not to go!" shouted his lordship

"My lord——"

"I order you to stay here!"

"Get out, please!" said Bulkeley.

"His lordship says——"

"You get out, or I shall pitch you out!" said Bulkeley sharply. "I've no time to waste on you. Now, then!"

"Stay where you are, Jenkins. If he touches you knock him down."

"Bless my soul!" murmured Mr. Bootles dazedly.

"If you please, my lord, I can't knock him down!" said Mr. Jenkins submissively. "He could knock me down quite easily, my lord. Perhaps I had better go, my lord!"

"You cowardly fool! If you go I discharge you without a character, and I will punish you somehow for disobeying my orders."

Mr. Jenkins looked oddly at his lordship. As a matter of fact, Mr. Jenkins realised very clearly that he could not remain at Rookwood, and that his well-paid though onerous service with Lord Mornington was at an end.

It is said that even the worm will turn. Mr. Jenkins was undoubtedly a good deal of a worm, and he proceeded to turn, now that it was quite clear that his noble employer could be of no further use or profit to him.

"So I'm sacked, my lord?" he said quietly.

"Yes, you fool!"

"But your lordship will be kind enough to recommend me——"

"Nothing of the kind. You are a dishonest scoundrel, and I've let you rob me because I've found you useful. You may go on robbin' me if you stay. If you go, I've done with you."

"Bless my soul!" repeated Mr. Bootles faintly. This extraordinary new boy almost overcame him.

"Well, if your lordship's done with me, I've done with your rotten lordship," said Mr. Jenkins. "And glad I'll be to see the last of such a rotten, ill-mannered, conceited, snobbish little cub!"

"What!"

"Which I've 'eld my tongue a long time," said Mr. Jenkins. "But I've

thought all the same, my lord. If you was my son I'd take the strap to you, and I'd thrash you within a hinch of your life, you miserable little bullying puppy!"

"Jenkins, you scoundrel, how dare you!"

"Why not, when I'm sacked?" grinned Mr. Jenkins. "And wot I thinks of you, my lord, is wot everybody else thinks of you, though it don't pay some of 'em to say so. A more nasty, bullying, ill-mannered little tripehound I never did see. Good-bye, my lord, and I 'ope you'll get thrashed into your senses!"

The worthy Jenkins turned away grinning.

"By gad!" gasped Lord Mornington at last. "By gad! The impertinent scoundrel!"

Bulkeley followed Jenkins, to see him out of the school.

"Mornington," said Mr. Bootles solemnly, "you should reflect upon what you have just heard from your servant. It should show you the esteem in which you are really held by persons who, from interested motives, submit for a time to your caprices and folly. I shall not punish you now, Mornington, but if there should be any repetition of your insolence towards me, your punishment will be severe. You may go."

His lordship left the study, gritting his teeth. Townsend and Topham were waiting for him in the passage. The nuts of the Fourth had spotted him taken into the study by Bulkeley, and they were waiting for him, to seize the opportunity of making his lordship's acquaintance.

"Glad to see you," said Townsend affably. "Gettin' ready for tea? Come with us and have tea in our study."

"Oh, do!" said Topham. "Delighted!"

Lord Mornington stared blankly at the two Classics. This overwhelming civility from two fellows he did not

know surprised him after his experiences at Rookwood.

"By Jove!" he said at last.

"Come along, dear boy!" said Townsend. "Sorry you've had such a rotten time with those cads, Silver and the rest. They're rank outsiders, you know—really decent chaps don't speak to them!"

"You'll find plenty of fellows like yourself here," said Topham. "Those outsiders are barred by our set."

Lord Mornington thawed considerably. He had come to Rookwood expecting the world, as it were, to bow down and worship his title and his money. He had received nothing but painful shocks so far. But this was a taste of the sycophancy he had longed for. With a cheerful look he accompanied Townsend and Topham to their study. It was past tea-time, and he was hungry. Rawson of the Fourth was in the study. The scholarship junior had the doubtful honour of sharing that study with the nuts of the Fourth.

Rawson glanced at Lord Mornington and nodded to him pleasantly enough. His lordship stared at him. Rawson passed out of the study, being due in the end study for tea with the Fistical Four.

"Who's that shabby bounder?" asked Mornington, with a curling lip.

"A scholarship cad!" said Townsend. "They had the cheek to shove him into this study. We don't speak to him."

"His father's a carpenter," said Topham.

"By Jove!"

"He's gone out to tea, so he won't bother you," said Townsend. "Sit down, old chap, and we'll soon have a spread ready, and a smoke afterwards, if you like."

"Oh, good!"

Lord Mornington sat down and lighted a cigarette, while the nuts of the Fourth prepared the spread. Townsend and Topham were in a state of great delight. They had bagged

his lordship, forestalling Smythe of the Shell in that noble object. It was easy to see that he was a fellow of their own tastes; the cigarette indicated as much.

Peele of the Fourth came in, and was duly presented to his lordship, who condescended to give him two fingers. Two fingers of a lord, however, were worth more than the whole fist of any other person to Peele.

"Here's your chair, Mornington," said Townsend, when tea was ready. "I think you'll find the toast all right."

Lord Mornington sat down to the table. The door opened while tea was in progress, and Jimmy Silver looked in, with a bull-pup in his arms.

"Hallo! I heard you were in here!" said Jimmy, as cheerily as if nothing had happened between his lordship and himself. "I've brought your dog. You left him in our study."

Jimmy set down Beauty on the carpet. Lord Mornington put his hand in his pocket, fished out a half-crown, and tossed it across the table.

"Take that for your trouble," he said.

Jimmy Silver looked at him.

"That's for me?" he asked.

"Yes; take it, and get out."

Townsend & Co. grinned.

The captain of the Fourth picked up the half-crown, and came round the table. He seized Lord Mornington by the hair and twisted his head forward and shoved the half-crown down his back. His lordship gave a roar. Then he was spun sprawling across the carpet, and Jimmy Silver walked out of the study, whistling cheerily.

Townsend & Co. rushed to help his lordship. Mornington was stuttering with rage.

"Don't mind him!" said Townsend comfortingly. "Rotten outsider, you know!"

"Why didn't you pile on him?" yelled Mornington.

"Ahem! Not worth it," murmured Townsend. Towny would as

soon have piled on a British Grenadier as on Jimmy Silver.

"Grooh! That dashed thing is down my back! Yow!"

"Let me fish it out, old chap," said Peele.

"Bah! Don't bother, you ass!"

"Oh!"

Lord Mornington shook himself till the half-crown slid down into his shoe. Then, with a very ruffled look, he sat down to tea again. Tea over, Townsend, with a glance at his companions, proposed a little game. His lordship was only too keen for a little game, and the table was rapidly cleared, and cards and cigarettes produced. Towny's new chum was evidently a fellow after Towny's own heart. Undoubtedly his lordship was a worthy addition to the noble circle of the Giddy Goats.

CHAPTER 31.

Rawson Puts His Foot Down!

RAWSON was having tea in the end study. The scholarship junior was often a guest there. The nutty atmosphere of his own study was not nearly so agreeable to him. Tea over, Jimmy Silver & Co. had to think of their prep, and Rawson took his leave. The burly junior left the end study, and went along the passage to his own. Jimmy Silver exchanged a wink with his chums.

"Listen for the sound of giddy warfare," he remarked. "There's a nutty party on in Rawson's study, and you know how Rawson likes 'baccy."

The Fistical Four grinned. Rawson had reached the study and opened the door. Then he coughed.

The study was thick with tobacco-smoke. Townsend and Topham, Peele and Lord Mornington were seated round the table, cigarettes in their mouths, cards in their hands. Cigarette-ends littered the floor, and coins and bank-notes the table. Lord Mornington had been losing, and

the nuts of the Fourth were in a state of great satisfaction.

Rawson coughed, and glared into the study.

"You horrid beasts!" he shouted.

"By gad!" said his lordship, looking up. "There's that shabby cad come back! Get out, you cad!"

"I've come to do my prep!" exclaimed Rawson angrily. "What do you mean by turning my study into a tap-room?"

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Townsend uneasily. "Look here, Rawson, do your prep in Silver's study for once."

Rawson did not reply.

He grasped at the table and up-ended it, and cards, money, cigarettes and ashtray rolled on the carpet and out into the passage.

"Collar the brute!" yelled Lord Mornington. "Jump on him!"

Rawson laughed contemptuously.

"Get on with the jumping!" he said. "You smoky rotters, you ought to be in a low pub—that's the place for you! Here, hands off, you wild-cat!"

His lordship, crimson with rage, was springing at Rawson, clutching at him savagely.

The sturdy scholarship junior grasped him at once. A red streak showed on his cheek where Mornington had clawed him. But his lordship had no chance to do further damage. Rawson swung him to the door.

"Back me up!" yelled Mornington.

The three nuts, taking their courage in both hands, as it were, rushed to the rescue.

Bump!

Lord Mornington went sprawling in the passage. Then Rawson turned on the nuts of the Fourth as they grasped at him.

There was a terrific, but brief, struggle in the study.

Then Peele went whirling out, sprawling across Mornington in the passage, and Topham went after him, flying. Townsend made a spring to

escape, but Rawson caught him by the collar. Townsend found himself being whirled through the doorway, and landed on his fallen friends. The Giddy Goats sprawled in a heap in the passage.

"Bravo!" yelled Jimmy Silver from his doorway, and a roar of laughter came from the other fellows looking out into the passage.

Rawson caught up the cards, the money and the cigarettes and pelted the struggling nuts with them till all their property lay round them in the passage, amid yells of merriment from the Fourth.

Then he slammed the study door and locked it, and sat down to his work.

Lord Mornington staggered up.

"Grooh!" gasped Townsend. "The awful beast! Grooh! N-n-never mind. Morny! Come with us to Smythe's study! Groooh!"

Lord Mornington shook his fist at Townsend, and strode away furiously. The merry little party in Towny's study had ended—not merrily. And as the new boy strode furiously away howls of laughter from the Classical Fourth followed his lordship.

CHAPTER 32.

A Little Too Lordly!

JIMMY SILVER sat up in bed, and yawned.

The rising-bell was clanging out over Rookwood School.

The sun shone cheerily in at the high windows of the dormitory. Jimmy Silver yawned, and turned out. Jimmy was generally the first fellow out of bed, and he was always ready to lend a helping hand to any fellow who was disposed to be slack. He jerked the bedclothes off Arthur Edward Lovell, bumped Raby with a pillow, and squeezed a sponge over Newcome—kindly assistance for which his chums did not testify the slightest symptoms of gratitude.

"You silly ass!" said Newcome, dodging out of bed. "Keep that sponge away, you frabjous idiot!"

"Shall I help you, Towny?" asked Jimmy Silver, dipping the sponge into a jug of water.

Townsend, the dandy of the Fourth, rolled out of bed in hot haste.

"No, you chump! Gerraway!"

"Topham, the rising-bell's stopped."

"Blow the rising-bell!" mumbled Topham drowsily. "I'm sleepy. I— Yow-ow-wow-woop!"

The wet sponge dabbed on Topham's face, and dispelled his sleepiness quite suddenly. Topham made one jump out of bed.

"Grooogh! You beast!"

"Now, then, Muffin!" said Jimmy Silver.

Tubby Muffin, the fat boy of the Fourth, looked nervously at Jimmy Silver. Tubby liked to snatch a few extra minutes of repose. But Jimmy Silver seemed in a very active mood that morning. He came along to Tubby's bed, and Tubby rolled out on the other side of it just in time to escape the sponge.

"Keep off, Silver, you beast!"

"Oh, buck up!" said Jimmy. "Don't be a slacker!"

Jimmy crossed over to the wash-basins, and was soon splashing merrily in cold water. The rest of the Classical Fourth had turned out, with one exception. The exception was the new boy in the Fourth—Lord Mornington. Mornington was awake, but he showed no sign of getting up.

"Time to turn out, Mornington!" said Townsend.

"I shall not be gettin' up yet," said the new boy. "Don't make such a row in the room, please. I'm goin' to sleep."

"Risin'-bell's gone."

"Hang the rising-bell!"

Jimmy Silver, towelling himself down, looked across at the new boy.

"You'll have a prefect after you if you're late down!" he called out.

"Mind your own business!" snapped Mornington.

"You'd better get up, old chap," said Townsend persuasively. "You have to come down with the rest of us, you know."

"I shall do nothing of the kind!"

Lord Mornington laid his head on the pillow again.

Jimmy Silver grinned, and finished his towelling. Having dressed as far as his shirt and trousers, he walked along to Lord Mornington's bed. With a powerful jerk he stripped off the bedclothes.

There was an exclamation of rage from the new boy as he sat up.

"You rotter! Leave my bedclothes alone!"

"Turn out!"

"I won't!"

"Slackers aren't allowed in this dorm," said Jimmy Silver. "Out you go!"

"I won't!" yelled his lordship.

Jimmy Silver smiled, and caught his lordship's ankles. Lord Mornington came out of bed then with a bump.

He jumped up in a fury, and rushed at Jimmy Silver.

It would have been easy enough for the athletic captain of the Fourth to knock him across the bed with a single drive. But he refrained. Jimmy contented himself with knocking up the new boy's clawing hands, and grasping him. His strong grip closed round Mornington, and his lordship was held as helpless as if he had been in the coils of a boa-constrictor.

He struggled and panted, his furious face looking into Jimmy Silver's smiling one.

"You rotter! Let me go!"

"Had enough?" smiled Jimmy.

"Confound you! Let me go!"

Jimmy Silver sat his lordship on the floor, and left him there, and returned to his dressing. Lord Mornington staggered up, panting. He seemed inclined for a moment to return to bed; but that was evidently useless, with Jimmy Silver in the dormitory.

He gave Jimmy a glare of hatred, but

did not come to close quarters again. His weedy limbs were still aching from Jimmy's iron grip.

"Better buck up, Morny!" murmured Townsend. "We have to be down by half-past, you know."

"Where is the bath-room?"

"Too late for that," said Townsend. "You have to turn out jolly early to get a chance at the bath-rooms. There isn't one for each, you know. Wash here."

"Where is the hot water, then?"

"The what?"

"The hot water."

Townsend grinned.

"We don't have hot water in the morning."

"Am I expected to wash in cold water?"

"Well, we all do."

"I refuse to do anything of the sort!"

"H'm!"

"You ain't forced to wash if you don't want to," said Muffin, who had already finished his ablutions. Muffin's ablutions did not extend farther than his chin. "Don't bother about it, Morny."

Lord Mornington uttered an exclamation of disgust.

"You dirty beast! Do you think I can go down without washing?"

"Well, I do," said Muffin contentedly.

"I don't believe in all this washing. I think it's unhealthy."

"Pah! I must have hot water. Where is the bell?"

"The bell?" ejaculated Lovell.

"I suppose I must ring for hot water."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Lord Mornington frowned at the laughing juniors, and proceeded to look for the bell. There was no bell to be found. The juniors watched him with great merriment. The idea of a fellow in the Fourth Form ringing for hot water in the morning tickled them greatly.

"I say, old chap," said Townsend. "There isn't a bell, you know. You'll really have to go it with cold water."

"Nonsense! I must have hot water! Someone fetch me some!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I will give ten shillings to whoever fetches me a can of hot water."

"For goodness' sake shut up, you purse-proud bounder!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver impatiently. "Do you think the fellows will be paid to fag for you?"

"Mind your own business! Who will fetch me hot water for ten shillings?" said his lordship, looking round.

There was a derisive chuckle from most of the Classical Fourth. But Tubby Muffin came to the rescue.

"I'm your man!" he exclaimed promptly. "Hand over the tin."

Lord Mornington felt in his jacket, and carelessly tossed a ten-shilling note to the fat junior. Tubby Muffin rolled out of the dormitory at once. Tubby was always hard-up, and ten shillings was a fortnight's allowance to him. Money was little to Lord Mornington, who had much more than was good for him. But it was a great deal to Tubby.

His lordship glanced at Jimmy with a sneering smile. Jimmy's face became very grim. His lordship sat on his bed to await Tubby's return. Jimmy Silver, who had finished dressing, waited, too.

CHAPTER 33.

Curing a Cad!

"HERE you are, my lord!" Tubby Muffin came into the dormitory with a big can, steaming. He plumped it down beside Mornington's wash-basin. Some of the Fourth Formers were grinning, but some of them looked grim. Lovell took Tubby Muffin by the ear.

"Muffin, you fat worm—"

"Yow! Leggo, Lovell!"

"You're not allowed to fag for that swanking cad, Muffin!"

"Yow-wow!"

"If you fag for him again, you'll get it in the neck!" continued Lovell, compressing his grip on Muffin's plump ear. "Do you savvy?"

"Yow-wow-wow! Leggo!"

"Get out, you worm!"

Lovell led Tubby to the door by his ear, and planted his boot behind him. Tubby departed along the passage at a great rate, with a loud yell. Meanwhile, Jimmy Silver had picked up the hot-water can.

"That is mine!" said Lord Mornington, between his teeth.

Jimmy shook his head.

"I won't be hard on you, as you're a new kid," he said. "But you've got to understand that you can't swank in the Fourth Form at Rookwood. You can keep your filthy money in your trousers-pocket. Cold water is good enough for us, and good enough for you, if not a little too good. This water is going out of the window!"

"You hound, give me that can!"

Jimmy carried the can towards the window.

"Will you give it to me?" shrieked his lordship.

"No jolly fear."

Lord Mornington made a rush after Jimmy, his hands clenched. Lovell and Raby and Newcome promptly collared him and held him back. The new boy struggled in their grasp, kicking furiously, and scratching like a cat.

"My hat! What a blessed wild beast!" ejaculated Lovell. "Sit on him!"

Bump! Lord Mornington went down, and Raby sat on his chest, smiling down at him. Lovell stood on his legs.

"Now keep quiet, you rotter!"

Jimmy Silver opened the window, and calmly poured out the hot water into the ivy outside.

He stepped away when the can was empty.

"Now, are you going to wash in cold water?" he asked.

"You hound! No!"

"We can't let you go down without washing," said Newcome. "Even Muffin washes a bit. You've got to wash."

"Let me go, you rotter!"

"Are you going to wash in cold water?"

"No!" shrieked his lordship.

"Then we'll jolly well wash you!" said Lovell determinedly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Lend a hand here, you fellows!"

The Classical juniors willingly lent a hand. Townsend and Topham and Peele, who had their own reasons for wishing to keep well with his wealthy lordship, did not join in; but they did not go to the rescue. They left the dormitory quietly, leaving Lord Mornington to settle with Jimmy Silver & Co.

A dozen hands were on his lordship. His pyjamas were yanked off, and Jimmy Silver swamped water into a foot-bath, and dipped a sponge in it. There was a gasp and a yell from his lordship as the cold, wet sponge plumped on him.

"Yooooogh! Yooop! Oh!"

He struggled desperately in the grasp of the laughing juniors.

But there was no escape for him. He was to be washed, and washed he was. Jimmy Silver swamped water over him, Oswald rubbed on soap, and Dickinson minor rubbed another cake of soap into his hair.

In a few minutes he was frothing with soap from head to foot, and shrieking with rage. Never had his lordship been so unceremoniously handled in all his lordly life before.

"There!" said Jimmy Silver approvingly. "Now he can finish himself—unless he wants to go down dressed in soap!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

His unhappy lordship was released, and he lay panting and gasping. The Classical Fourth streamed out of the dormitory, leaving him to his own devices.

Mornington staggered up, and shook a soapy fist after them, stuttering and spluttering with rage and soap. He was left splashing wildly in the foot-bath, striving to clean off that liberal allowance of soap.

The Fistical Four strolled out cheerily into the quadrangle in the sunshiny morning. They felt that they had done

their duty, and deserved well of their country.

"We shall cure that swanking cad in the long run," remarked Jimmy Silver. "If he stays at Rookwood long enough, we'll make him quite decent. It's kill or cure!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Lord Mornington was down in time for breakfast. He scowled savagely at the *Fistical Four* across the breakfast-table, and Jimmy Silver & Co. replied with cheery smiles.

Lord Mornington was accustomed to causing dismay with his frowns, but he was making the painful discovery that matters were very, very different at Rookwood.

CHAPTER 34.

His Lordship Takes French Leave!

LORD MORNINGTON took his place in the Fourth Form for the first time that morning. He was the object of a good deal of curiosity in the Fourth.

A titled fellow, simply rolling in money, was naturally an object of interest. It would not have been difficult for Lord Mornington to become popular in the Form if he had been a different kind of fellow. But "swank" and overbearing manners did not conduce to popularity.

Townsend and the other nuts were willing to be friendly with him, and put up with his uppish manners. Tubby Muffin would have stood anything from a fellow who had so much money, but very few others were inclined to stand his nonsense—least of all Jimmy Silver & Co.

The Modern Fourth were in the Form-room for first lesson, and they regarded his lordship very curiously. Tommy Dodd & Co. had seen something of him already, and heard more. Their opinion of him was that he was a rank outsider, and that the Classics were very welcome to him.

Mr. Bootles was very patient with his lordship that morning. The Fourth

Form master knew a good deal about his lordship's early training, and could make allowances for him. Perhaps, also, the fact that his guardian was a governor of the school had its influence.

Mornington had lost both his parents at an early age, and his guardian, a busy political gentleman, had neglected him, so there were excuses to be made for him.

His lordship had to go to the bottom of the class, even below Tubby Muffin, who had been the champion dunce of the Fourth before Mornington's arrival. But that did not affect him in the least. He took no pride whatever in Form work, and evidently regarded it as a miserable infliction, only to be submitted to because it could not be avoided.

After morning lessons Lord Mornington was joined by the nuts as he came sullenly out of the Form-room.

His nature was haughty and unpleasant, but he had already realised the need of friends of some sort, and he allowed Townsend and Topham and Peele to be friendly, though in a condescending manner. But Townsend & Co. were ready to take any amount of condescension from a noble lord.

They sympathised with him, somewhat hypocritically, for, as a matter of fact, the scene in the dormitory had tickled them. But they fully agreed with him in his dislike of Jimmy Silver & Co., and their sweet flattery was something of a solace to his indignant lordship.

After dinner, while most of the Classical Fourth had gone down to kick a football about on the playing-field, Lord Mornington strolled in the quadrangle with his new friends.

"You don't care for football?" asked Townsend.

His lordship sniffed.

"No! Rubbish!"

"Quite my idea," agreed Townsend. "Those duffers of the end study fag at it no end. I don't believe in workin' at football. I don't care twopence whether we beat St. Jim's or not!"

"Rotten bore, football!" said Peele.

"Is there anythin' doin' here?" asked Lord Mornington. "It looks to me as if I shall be bored to death in this rotten place! Beastly of my guardian to send me here!"

"Well, we make things lively sometimes," said Topham. "We can introduce you to a chap who knows all about geegees, if you like."

"There are races on this afternoon," said Mornington. "Do you ever go to the races?"

"Well, we've done it on a half-holiday," said Townsend cautiously. "Of course, it's strictly on the Q T. It means the sack if it comes out!"

"They wouldn't sack me. My guardian's a governor of the school!"

"Well, we're not in the same boat, and we have to be jolly careful. Can't be done this afternoon; it's not a holiday."

"Same old grind in the Form-room, I suppose?"

"Yes; can't be helped."

"I don't see why it can't be helped. Suppose we go, all the same?"

"What! Cut lessons?"

"Yes."

"No jolly fear!" said Peele. "Why, it would mean a flogging!"

"Must draw a line somewhere," said Townsend, shaking his head. "It's risky enough on a half-holiday!"

Lord Mornington sneered.

"I took you for sportin' fellows!" he said.

"We're sportin' enough!" said Townsend a little tartly. "But it's no good runnin' one's head against a brick wall!"

"Look here, I'll have a car out, and we'll have a rippin' run!" said Mornington. "I'll stand the car; I've got plenty of th'!"

"Make it Saturday afternoon, then."

"Rot! I'm sick of grindin' lessons! Let's make it this afternoon. I suppose I can telephone from here for a car?"

"Ye-es—but—"

"You can dodge into Bootles' study and use his 'phone when he's out

there," said Peele. "We do sometimes. But—"

"Well, then, we'll make the car come to Coombe, so that we shan't be spotted goin', and walk down to the village and meet it."

"But we can't cut lessons!" exclaimed Topham.

"We can make up some lie for that," said Mornington coolly. "The car ran away with us, and we couldn't stop it, or somethin' of that sort."

"My hat!"

"Or we had a breakdown somewhere. Anythin' will do for a yarn. And we can have a rippin' afternoon out."

"Phew!"

"Better than grindin' in the Form-room, what!"

"Yes, rather! But—"

"Well, come!"

Townsend & Co. looked at one another. It was a strong temptation, but the thought of the possible consequences made them hesitate.

"Well, you are a goer!" said Townsend at last. "I—I wonder if we could risk it?"

"Suppose it's a lickin', we can stand it," said Lord Mornington. "I tell you I'm fed-up with this place, and I'm goin' to have some excitement, anyway. We could have a rippin' afternoon. We can tell any lie you like when we get back."

"It might be worked!" said Townsend thoughtfully. "We got in the car for a ten minutes' run, the blessed thing ran away—breakdown tryin' to get back—long walk home—what!"

"Wouldn't do for the Head, but it might do for Bootles," said Peele. "Bootles is a simple old duffer. Let's chance it!"

Topham nodded.

"Chance it," he said. "You'll have to dodge Bootles to get at his telephone, though. Let's go and scout."

The four juniors entered the School House. Townsend tapped at Mr Bootles' door, with an excuse ready if the Form-master happened to be there. But the study was empty.

"Better let me 'phone," said Townsend. "They know me at the garage at Lantham."

"Go ahead, then."

"It's understood that you're footin' the bill."

"Yes, yee!"

Townsend entered the study, his comrades keeping watch in the passage. The dandy of the Fourth rang up the garage at Lantham. He was known there—in times of prosperity Townsend had had a car out before. In a few minutes the arrangements were made, and Townsend quitted the study.

"All serene!" he said. "They're sendin' a car at once to Coombe to wait for us outside the station. A good car for four, I told them."

"Good!"

"It'll be there soon after we get there, if we walk," said Townsend.

"Come on, then!"

The nuts left the House in great spirits. Townsend and Topham and Peele were quite under Mornington's influence by this time. Townsend stopped to speak to Tom Rawson in the quad. They were on the worst of terms—but that did not matter to Towny when he had an axe to grind.

"Tell Smythe I've gone down to Coombe, will you, Rawson?" he asked.

"Tell him we're comin' back in a car."

"Certainly!" said Rawson.

"We shall be back before afternoon lessons," said Townsend.

"Right-ho!"

The nuts went on their way. Townsend was grinning, pleased with his own artfulness.

"Bootles is sure to inquire after us when we don't turn up for lessons," he said. "Rawson will tell him all that. It will show that we only intended to go out for a half-hour or so before lessons, and bear out the yarn we've got to spin when we come back. Savvy?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the nuts of the Fourth strolled out of gates, and walked away merrily down the road to Coombe.

CHAPTER 35.

The Truants!

"THERE'S the blessed bell!" said Jimmy Silver.

The Fistical Four were still on the football ground when the bell rang for afternoon classes.

They joined the Fourth, streaming to the Form-room.

Mr. Bootles came in, and found all his Form in their places save four. He noted the four empty places, and frowned.

"Townsend, Topham, Peele, and Mornington are not here," he said.

The Fourth Form were already aware of that, and they were wondering where the absentees were.

"Do you know why these boys are not here, Silver?"

"I haven't seen them since dinner, sir."

"H'm!"

The lesson proceeded, but the absentees did not appear. First lesson being over, and the four places still vacant, Mr. Bootles' frown grew more and more portentous.

"Does anyone know what has become of those four boys?" he asked.

Rawson stood up.

"They went out after dinner, sir. Townsend left a message with me for Smythe of the Shell."

"Where did they go, Rawson?"

"To Coombe, sir. I'm afraid there may have been an accident," said Rawson. "Townsend said they were going for a run in a car, but would be back before lessons."

"Bless my soul!"

Mr. Bootles' anger vanished at the thought of an accident.

"You are sure they were going in a motor-car, Rawson?"

"Townsend said they would come back in a car, sir."

"H'm, h'm!" Mr. Bootles looked worried. "Surely nothing but an accident could have detained them so late! Silver, I shall leave you in charge of the Form for a few minutes."

Mr. Bootles quitted the Form-room

hastily. He hurried to his study to telephone to the police-station at Coombe for news of an accident.

"What the dickens has happened to the bounders?" said Lovell. "They can't be cutting lessons, surely, on purpose?"

"Just like Mornington to do it," grinned Oswald. "I shouldn't think the others had the nerve, though."

"Bet you they're cutting lessons, and they'll come back with a thumping yarn about a breakdown," said Dickinson minor.

Jimmy Silver nodded thoughtfully. That was his own belief. He knew that Lord Mornington was reckless of consequences, and it looked as if he had led the nuts into an escapade. There would be trouble for all four of them when they returned, there was no doubt about that.

Mr. Bootles came back into the Form-room, frowning.

Lessons went on, but there was no sign of the four. When the time came for the class to dismiss they had not returned.

The Fourth Formers went out in a buzz of excitement.

"This puts the lid on, and no mistake," said Lovell. "They're staying out for a lark. Why, it will mean a flogging all round."

"Unless they can stuff Bootles up," said Jimmy Silver.

"He will want a lot of stuffing. Bootles is an ass, but not quite so much an ass as all that."

"They must be off their rockers, I think," said Jimmy Silver. "They've got a good nerve, but it isn't quite the game to cut lessons—and it's rotten caddish to tell lies about it afterwards—and that's their game!"

"Silver!"

Mr. Bootles looked out of the doorway of the School House.

"Yes, sir!" said Jimmy.

"I should like you to go down to Coombe and see if you can find out anything of Mornington and his companions. I fear that something may have happened, though I cannot get

news of any accident. Lovell, Raby and Newcome can accompany you."

"We'll go with pleasure, sir," said Jimmy.

"If you get any news, bring it to me at once."

"Yes, sir."

The Fistical Four started at once. They soon arrived at Coombe. But there was no sign in the village of the missing four. Information was obtained at the village tuckshop, however. Old Mrs. Wicks had packed a lunch-basket for four young gentlemen in a motor-car, and the four were Townsend & Co. They had gone off in the direction of High Coombe, Mrs. Wicks told them.

The Fistical Four quitted the tuckshop, looking grave enough.

"That means that they've gone to the races," said Jimmy Silver quietly. "We're not bound to mention that to Bootles, though. My hat! Mornington is rather an improvement on the giddiest of the Giddy Goats, I think! Fancy cutting lessons to go to the races!"

"The rotter ought to be kicked out of the school!" growled Lovell.

"They must be coming back soon," said Jimmy. "Let's have a stroll round, and see if we can see anything of the car. They're playing the giddy ox, but we might as well give them a tip what to expect."

"Oh, all right!"

And the juniors took the road to High Coombe.

CHAPTER 36.

Not a Merry Outing!

"STOP here!"

Lord Mornington snapped out the words.

His lordship was in an exceedingly bad temper. Townsend and Topham and Peele were looking surly and sullen.

The big car was whizzing along the road homeward in the dusk. The four juniors were tired, hungry, dispirited, and exasperated.

That afternoon at the races had been a splendid prospect—viewed at Rookwood before they started. It did not seem quite so splendid after the event.

The result had been what they might have expected. They had seen the races; and they had found horsey gentlemen quite willing to accept their bets. They had plunged on their "fancy"—with the lamentable result that Townsend and Topham and Peele were "cleaned out," and Lord Mornington, large as was his supply of cash, was in the same condition.

His lordship had lost ten times as much as all his companions put together, but the loss was probably not so serious to him. But it was sufficient to make him sulky and savage. As for the three nuts, they were in low spirits and bitterly chagrined. And now that the escapade was over, the consequences loomed near, and seemed much more serious than they had seemed before.

Altogether, there had seldom been a surlier or more ill-tempered party than the four young rascals in the big car.

Lord Mornington signalled to the chauffeur to stop, as the car was passing a wayside public-house on the High Coombe road, a few miles out of Coombe. The car came to a halt.

"What are we stoppin' for?" asked Townsend sulkily. "We're late already. We don't want to miss callin'-over."

"Hang calling-over!"

"That's all very well," growled Topham. "But there's the dickens to pay already, and we don't want to make it worse."

Mornington sneered.

"Beginnin' to get scared?" he asked bitterly.

"Oh, go and eat coke! It was a rotten idea, anyway."

"Pah! Keep your courage up. I'm not afraid."

"You've got a governor at Rookwood to step in for you," said Peele sulkily. "We haven't."

"What are we stoppin' for?" growled Topham.

Lord Mornington stepped out of the car.

"I want somethin' to drink," he said. "And we can't get home yet, anyway. We've got to turn off to Lantham."

"Lantham! What the thunder for?"

"That car's got to be paid for. I shall have to get some money there. I lost all my tin at the races."

"Precious ass you are!" growled Topham. "The chauffeur has to be paid for the car."

"Well, I can't pay him."

"Oh, rotten! We've no time to go to Lantham. Besides, how can you get money at Lantham? The bank's closed."

"I can get money there," said Lord Mornington. "I arranged that before I came to Rookwood, in case I should have a flutter and go stony. I've a friend there who'll see me through."

"A moneylender?" exclaimed Townsend.

"Well, yes. You needn't be afraid," sneered his lordship. "I shan't ask you to pay for the car. Come in and have a drink."

"A—a—a drink!"

"Yes, a—a—a drink!" mimicked Mornington. "I want a pick-me-up."

He strode into the public-house; the nuts, after a little hesitation, followed him. Most of their recklessness had evaporated. They had sampled some champagne at the races, but its effect had passed off, leaving them feeling low and miserable.

"May as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb," said Townsend recklessly. "Come on!"

The chauffeur, sitting stolid in the driving-seat, looked after his peculiar passengers curiously, and shrugged his shoulders. He had driven Rookwood fellows before, but never a party quite like this.

Mornington strode into the inn, with a disdainful glance around him. A fat and rubicund man came to ask what he wanted.

Two or three carters were in the dusky room, drinking ale and smoking, and they looked at the Rookwood party.

"Can I have some champagne here?" asked Mornington.

"My eye!" said the landlord, in astonishment. "I don't keep champagne 'ere, and I shouldn't serve it to boys if I did."

"Don't be a fool! What have you got to drink?"

The rubicund gentleman looked steadily at Lord Mornington. Mornington had already drunk more than his companions, and his face was flushed, and his head a little unsteady.

"Looks to me as if you've been drinking already," said the landlord. "You won't drink here, sir."

"You insolent rascal!"

"Wot!"

"Give me some whisky, if you have nothing decent to drink."

"Come away, you fool!" muttered Townsend.

"Do you hear me?" shouted Mornington. He fumbled in his pockets, and produced the loose cash he had left, and threw it on the counter. "Now serve me!"

The landlord shook his head.

"I don't serve whisky to schoolboys, sir," he said. "You'd better go."

"You silly fool!"

"And you'd better keep a civil tongue in your head, or you'll be put outside, and sharp," said the publican angrily. "I'll serve you with lemonade, if you like, and that's all you'll get 'ere."

"Lemonade! Fool!"

"My hat!" muttered Townsend. "The silly fool's tipsy! Come away, Mornington. Let's get back to the car. Do you hear?"

Mornington shook his hand off angrily. His face was flushed crimson, and his eyes gleamed. His savage temper had full play now. The wine he had foolishly drunk was running riot in his head.

"Will you serve me?" he shouted.

"No, sir, I won't!"

"Then I'll help myself."

"By gosh!"

Lord Mornington grasped at a bottle of whisky among those on the bar. The landlord, quite out of temper now, caught him by the arm and dragged him back. The next moment Mornington's fist was dashed full in his face.

"Oh, great Scott!" gasped Peele.

The stout landlord staggered back, and collapsed on the sanded floor. He sat there dazedly, Lord Mornington glaring down at him.

"Now will you serve me, you scoundrel?"

Mine host staggered to his feet. He placed himself with his back to the door.

"You cheeky young rascal!" he gasped. "I'll show you! I'll keep you 'ere while I send for the police!"

"Now we're in for it!" groaned Townsend. "What fools we were to come out with that mad blackguard!"

Lord Mornington strode to the door. He was sobered now.

"Let me pass!" he exclaimed.

"You don't pass," said the publican grimly. "I don't want your sort in the Peal of Bells, my fine young gentleman. You'll wait for the policeman."

"Let me pass, you scoundrel!"

"For goodness' sake let us go!" exclaimed Topham, in utter dismay. "We shall get into a row over this."

"That you will," said the publican. "I'll see to that. I know where you come from—Rookwood. I know Rookwood caps. If you want to go, you'll give me your names, and I'll come up to the school and speak to your 'eadmaster. Either that or wait 'ere for the policeman."

"Throw him aside!" shouted Mornington.

"Joe! Tom! Lend a 'and 'ere!"

Two big carters, grinning, joined the landlord at the door. Mornington dropped his hands. There was no chance of escape.

"We—we can't give our names," stammered Townsend. "We—we—"

"You won't go till you do!"

"We will give our names, if you like," said Lord Mornington, a sudden gleam coming into his eyes. "My name is Silver—James Silver."

Townsend started. In a moment he caught the idea.

"Mine's Lovell!" he muttered.

"Raby!" said Peele.

"Newcome!" said Topham.

Mr. Snaggs wrote the four names with a stump of pencil upon a dirty shirt-cuff, and stood aside from the door.

"You'll 'ear of this," he said.

The four juniors passed out, glad to escape. They clambered into the car.

"Pretty mess you've got us into, you tipsy fool!" muttered Townsend.

"Oh, shut up! Lantham, driver!"

The big car glided away to Lantham. Lord Mornington burst into a laugh.

"That fat scoundrel will go to Rookwood and make a complaint. It will be a pleasant surprise for that meddling old Silver!" he exclaimed.

"It was a dirty trick, all the same," said Topham. "But better him than us. I wish we'd never come out!"

Townsend and Peele fervently shared that wish. Blackguards as they were, their blackguardism stopped a good deal short of that of Lord Mornington. But it was a little too late to think of that now. The car glided away through the dusk to Lantham, with three faces in it, at least, darkly clouded.

CHAPTER 27.

Condemned!

"SOMETHING'S up!" remarked Smythe of the Shell saptently. A good many of the fellows agreed with him, though what was "up" they could not guess. Several of them had observed a visitor being shown into Dr. Chisholm's study—a very peculiar visitor for the Head of Rookwood to receive. Jobson of the

fifth knew who it was. Jobson mentioned that he had seen the man before—a chap named Snaggs, who kept a public-house on the High Coombe road.

What the landlord of the Peal of Bells could want with the Head of Rookwood was a mystery. He had driven up in a trap, and he was quite a long time with the Head. While he was there, Mr. Bootles was sent for. Tubby Muffin, scouting in the passage, heard a murmur of voices, but that was all. The publican had been shown out at last, and had driven off in his trap, and Mr. Bootles was seen to be looking very disturbed and glum. He had also directed Bulkeley of the Sixth to bring Jimmy Silver and his companions to him as soon as they returned to the school.

It looked as if the Fistical Four were booked for trouble of some kind. They had not returned yet, though it was close on time for evening call-over.

Mack, the porter, was about to close the gates when the chums of the Fourth arrived, breathless, and came in just in time. They appeared at calling-over, and answered to their names, Mr. Bootles taking the call. Lord Mornington and his three friends were still absent.

Bulkeley called to the four juniors as call-over finished:

"You're wanted in Mr. Bootles' study—Silver, Lovell, Raby, and Newcome."

"Yes, Bulkeley," said Jimmy Silver cheerily.

"What's the row?" whispered Oswald.

"Nothing. Bootles sent us to look for Mornington & Co., that's all."

That was all, so far as Jimmy Silver knew. The Fistical Four repaired to their Form-master's study, and found Mr. Bootles with a grim brow.

"Follow me to the Head!" said Mr. Bootles curtly.

"Yes, sir," said Jimmy, in wonder. "We haven't found Mornington and the rest, sir. We looked for them a good while."

"Never mind that now. Come with me."

Mr. Bootles rustled away.

Jimmy Silver & Co., somewhat surprised, followed him, and entered the Head's study at his heels. They found Dr. Chisholm with a frowning brow.

"So they have returned," said the Head.

"They are here, sir," said Mr. Bootles.

"Silver," rumbled the Head, "I have received an extraordinary complaint respecting you and your companions. What have you to say?"

"I don't know what the complaint is, sir."

"You have visited a public-house!"

"I have?" ejaculated Jimmy, in amazement.

"You and your companions. You demanded to be served with drink, and caused a disturbance when you were refused, and struck the proprietor, who very properly requested you to leave."

Jimmy Silver gazed blankly at the Head.

Lovell and Raby and Newcome were simply agape. They could scarcely believe their ears.

"What have you to say?" demanded the Head sternly.

"I—I don't know what to say!" gasped Jimmy. "We haven't done anything of the kind."

"What!"

"We've certainly not entered any public-house; and as for asking for drink, I should think you'd know us better, sir," said Jimmy, with spirit. "If anybody has told you so, it was untrue."

"A jolly thumping He!" said Lovell vigorously.

"Mr. Bootles will tell you that we're not that kind of chaps, sir," said Raby.

Mr. Bootles looked at them sadly, but did not speak.

"So you deny the whole matter?" said the Head, eyeing them grimly.

"Certainly we do, sir."

"Where have you been?"

"Mr. Bootles asked us to go to Coombe, and look for some fellows who have stayed out, sir."

"Did you go along the High Coombe road?"

"Yes, for some distance."

"Did you enter the Peal of Bells public-house?"

"We did not go so far as that, or we shouldn't have been back for calling-over."

"Ah! I see you know the place!"

"We have passed it lots of times on our bikes, sir, going to Lantham," said Lovell. "We couldn't help knowing it."

"You are acquainted with the landlord?"

"Not in the least, sir."

"I am sorry, but I cannot accept your statements," said the Head grimly. "The landlord of the Peal of Bells, apparently a very honest man, has driven over to the school to complain of your conduct. You entered his place—strictly out of bounds for Rookwood boys—and made a disturbance there. He made you give your names before you left."

Jimmy Silver almost staggered.

"He must be mistaken, sir, or he has lied," he said.

"Is the man a perfect stranger to you?"

"Perfectly."

"Then why should a perfect stranger take the trouble to drive several miles to make an unfounded complaint against you?"

"Oh!" murmured Newcome.

That was a poser to the Fistical Four. They stood staring blankly at the Head, in a state of bewilderment.

"But—but we haven't been there," stammered Jimmy Silver. "We haven't, sir. If you know the distance, you must know we couldn't walk so far, and get back in time for call-over. Mr. Bootles will tell you the time we started."

"This is mere prevarication," said the Head. "You hired a motor-car or a taxi-cab. Mr. Snaggs stated dis-

tingly that you arrived in a car of some kind."

"Oh, my hat!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver.

As in a flash he understood.

Four young blackguards in a motor-car. He did not need telling that the party at the Peal of Bells must have been Lord Mornington and his companions. His sudden exclamation was not without its effect on the Head, though Dr. Chisholm drew a wrong impression from it.

"You see, all is known, Silver," said the doctor coldly. "Further denials will be useless, as you can perceive. You are convicted of having acted in a disgraceful manner—disgraceful to yourselves, and disgraceful to the school you belong to. Mr. Bootles has spoken very favourably of your previous character, or I should expel you from the school. As it is, I consider that a severe flogging will meet the case, and I trust it will be a lesson to you."

"A—a—a flogging!" gasped Jimmy Silver. "But it's all a mistake, sir; we were not there."

"Nonsense!"

"We weren't, sir!" exclaimed Lovell hotly. "We haven't been near the place, and we haven't been in a motor-car to-day. Unless Snaggs was telling lies, some other fellows must have given him our names."

"That is enough, Lovell. Mr. Bootles, you will kindly see that these boys are sent to my study for a flogging after prayers to-morrow."

"Yes, Dr. Chisholm," said the Form-master heavily.

"But——" burst out Jimmy.

"Silence! You may go."

"It's unjust!" howled Lovell, almost beside himself.

"Remove that boy, please, Mr. Bootles."

Mr. Bootles dropped his hand on Lovell's shoulder, and the junior, choking with rage, was pushed from the study. Jimmy, Newcome, and Raby followed, bewildered and enraged.

"My boys—my boys," said Mr. Bootles sadly, "this is a blow to me! How could you be guilty of such conduct? I have had every confidence in you."

"We're not guilty, sir," said Jimmy Silver, as calmly as he could. "Someone else gave our names."

Mr. Bootles shook his head.

"Who could have done so?" he said. "Mr. Snaggs positively stated that he knew the Rookwood caps of his unruly visitors."

"I know jolly well——" burst out Lovell.

Jimmy checked him with a glance and a pressure on the arm. Whatever the consequences, the chums of the Fourth could not betray the young blackguards who had got them into this scrape. And they could not be sure, though their suspicion was well grounded. There was a chance, at least, that it was not the nuts of the Fourth who had given their names. And in any case, they did not feel that they could sneak.

"What were you about to say, Lovell?"

"N-n-nothing, sir," stammered Lovell.

Mr. Bootles sighed and walked away. The Fistical Four went to the end study, savage and furious. It was past tea-time, but they were in no mood for tea.

"Why didn't you let me tell Bootles?" demanded Lovell angrily. "You know jolly well it must have been Mornington and his set. They were in a car, anyway."

"We can't be sure!"

"Sure enough!" growled Raby.

"We can't give them away," said Jimmy, with a shake of the head.

"Not after they've used our names!" exclaimed Lovell.

"We haven't proof they did. I believe they did, but we haven't any proof. Anyway, I'd rather not sneak, even if it's justified. There's other ways."

"Blessed if I see it! We're booked

for a flogging in the morning for something we haven't done!" exclaimed Lovell savagely.

"Put not your trust in princes—put it in your Uncle James!" said Jimmy Silver cheerfully.

"Oh, don't gas! What are you going to do?"

"I'm going to speak to Bulkeley."

"What the merry thunder for?"

"Come with me and see," said Jimmy Silver.

And Lovell & Co., with visible signs of impatience, followed their Uncle James to the study of the captain of Rookwood.

CHAPTER 35.

"Bulkeley is a brick!"

BULKELEY of the Sixth looked sternly at Jimmy Silver & Co. as they came in. He evidently knew all about the story of the visit to the Peal of Bells.

"Well, you young rascals, what do you want?" he asked.

"We want you to help us, Bulkeley," said Jimmy Silver calmly. "We've a right to ask you, as you're captain of the school!"

"Bulkeley can't help us, fathead," snorted Lovell. "He believes that we've been pub-haunting—look at his face."

"I haven't much choice about believing it," said Bulkeley. "I understand that you're to be flogged. I must say you deserve it."

"We should, if we'd done what we're accused of," said Jimmy Silver. "The point is that we haven't!"

Bulkeley looked at him keenly.

"The Head won't listen to us, and Bootles has turned against us," said Jimmy. "He might have known us better. But you can prove it, Bulkeley, if you choose, and I think we've a right to ask our captain to see justice done."

"You've a right to ask that, certainly," said Bulkeley, with a nod. "Do you mean to say that you deny the whole thing?"

"Yes, from beginning to end. Other parties gave our names at the Peal of Bells."

Bulkeley looked incredulous.

"It's clear that the fellows who went there belonged to Rookwood," he said. "Do you accuse other Rookwood fellows of borrowing your names to get out of a scrape?"

"There's nothing else to account for it. We don't accuse anybody—that isn't our business. We want to prove that we weren't the parties, that's all!"

"How can you prove it?"

"We can't—but you can." Jimmy Silver took a photograph from his pocket, and laid it on the table. "Look at that!"

"It's your photograph," said Bulkeley.

"Yes."

"What do you want me to do with that?"

"I want you to take it to the Peal of Bells, and ask Mr. Snaggs whether that's one of the boys who came into his place to-day," said Jimmy Silver calmly.

Bulkeley jumped.

"I know it's a lot to ask," said Jimmy. "It'll take you a good hour on your bike, there and back. It's that or letting us be flogged in the morning for something we never did, and never thought of doing."

"I'll go!" said Bulkeley promptly.

The prefect slipped the photograph into his pocket and left the study. Lovell and Raby and Newcome hugged their study leader in huge delight.

"Blessed if I should have thought of it," said Raby. "It wanted a nerve to ask Bulkeley, too! But he's a brick—a gilt-edged brick!"

"He is—he are!" said Jimmy Silver. "Keep smiling, and trust Uncle James!"

A few minutes later the Fistical Four had the satisfaction of seeing Bulkeley wheel his bicycle down to the gates. As Mack opened the gate for Bulkeley, four flushed juniors came in.

Bulkeley glanced at them. Lord Mornington and his merry party had returned at last.

"Report yourselves to Mr. Bootles," said Bulkeley. And he mounted his machine, and rode away towards Coombe.

Townsend & Co. came in—three of them at least with apprehensive hearts. They had concocted their story, and they hoped that it would pass muster. But they were haunted with doubts, now that the hour had come.

They made their way to the master's study.

Mr. Bootles greeted them with a frown, and with mingled relief and anger. He was glad to see that there had been no accident to the absentees, as he had feared. But that made his anger all the keener for the needless anxiety they had caused him.

"Well, where have you been since dinner?" the Form-master asked grimly.

"Awful sorry, sir!" began Townsend. "We've had an awful time, sir!" said Peele pathetically.

"Simply worn out, sir!" said Topham.

"What has happened, then?" exclaimed Mr. Bootles.

"I'm very sorry for this, sir," said Lord Mornington calmly. "I asked these chaps to come for a run with me in a car to Lantham. We fully intended to be back in time for afternoon lessons. The fool of a chauffeur took a lonely road across the moor, and the car broke down!"

"Indeed!" said Mr. Bootles.

"We tried a short cut across the moor to get back, sir, and lost our way. We've been wandering about for hours and hours, hungry and tired," said Lord Mornington. "We haven't touched a bit of food since dinner."

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Bootles.

"We've had an awful time!" groaned Townsend. "I—I thought we were quite lost, and should have to stay out all night on the moor."

"Dear me!" said Mr. Bootles, his anger quite disappeared. "You should not have gone out in the car at all. However, if the matter is as you say, I shall excuse you for missing lessons. I may point out to you that if you had joined in the scouting excursions, Townsend, you would know your way about the country much better, and this would not have happened. I shall, in the circumstances, excuse you; but please do not let anything of the kind happen again. You may go and ask the housekeeper for supper."

"Thank you, sir!"

The four young rascals quitted the study, almost breathless with delight at their good luck.

CHAPTER 39.

Not Quite a Success!

JIMMY SILVER looked anxiously out of the doorway of the School House, into the darkness of the quad.

It was getting towards bed-time, and Bulkeley had not yet returned. The Fistical Four had done their prep—though in an anxious mood. Upon the result of Bulkeley's mission depended whether they were to be flogged in the morning, rather a serious matter for the chums of the end study.

They were anxious for the captain of Rookwood to return. Townsend & Co. had joined a merry party in Smythe's study, little dreaming of danger, and firmly believing themselves well out of their scrape. There was probably a surprise in store for those cheery young gentlemen.

"There's the gate bell," said Lovell at last, as a tinkle was heard across the silent quad.

"Bulkeley at last," said Raby, in great relief.

The lights of a trap glimmered through the darkness. A stout man drove up in a trap to the House, followed by Bulkeley on a bicycle. The captain of Rookwood jumped down and

came in, followed by the rubicund proprietor of the Peal of Bells. Jimmy Silver & Co. did not know the man, but they guessed whom it was.

Mr. Bootles came out into the hall, and frowned slightly at the sight of the red-faced Mr. Snaggs. He had supposed that he had seen the last of that gentleman.

"This is that— What—what!" said Mr. Bootles, in his jerky way.

"I have asked this gentleman to come here, sir," said Bulkeley. "It appears that Silver was not in the party that made a disturbance at his house to-day, and he has very kindly consented to come and clear him."

"Which I'm sorry, sir," said Mr. Snaggs. "The young himp gave me that there name, which I believed 'im. And I says to myself, says I, I ain't going to allow the wrong feller to be licked, says I, to save me a little trouble. So 'ere I am!"

"Bless my soul!"

"I showed Mr. Snaggs a photograph of Silver, sir," explained Bulkeley. "He did not recognise it."

"Dear me! Silver! Lovell! Mr. Snaggs, please look at these juniors! Are they the boys who visited your place to-day?" asked Mr. Bootles, very much flurried.

Mr. Snaggs scanned the Fistical Four. They submitted cheerfully to the inspection.

"Never seed 'em before, sir," said the publican.

"Bless my soul! Would you mind stepping into the Head's room and assuring Dr. Chisholm on that point?"

"Werry pleased, sir."

"This is where we come out on top," murmured Jimmy Silver, as the chums followed Mr. Bootles and the publican. "Didn't I tell you to put your money on your Uncle James?"

Dr. Chisholm looked up as the publican was shown in.

"Really, Mr. Bootles—" he began.

Mr. Bootles explained hastily.

"Which that's the truth, sir," said

Mr. Snaggs. "I 'ave never clapped heyes on these young gents afore."

"I am much obliged to you for coming to tell me so, sir," said the Head courteously. "You have prevented a very serious injustice being done. My boys, I am sorry for this mistake. It is clear now that your names were given by other persons. Mr. Snaggs, you are of opinion that your visitors were, however, boys of this school?"

"I knowed the caps," said Mr. Snaggs.

"Then perhaps you may be able to point out the real delinquents, since you are here. Mr. Bootles, will you have the kindness to assemble the Lower Forms in Hall?"

"Certainly, sir!"

There was considerable excitement in the school when the Head's order went forth. Shell and Fourth, Third and Second, turned out of their studies and the Common-room, and were called in from the gym, to assemble in Hall, most of them wondering what was in the wind.

The Fistical Four took their places in the ranks of the Fourth. Lord Mornington and his comrades were there, looking somewhat uneasy. They had not seen Mr. Snaggs yet, but their consciences were not at ease. There was a hush as Dr. Chisholm entered the Hall. Then Townsend gave a gasp of terror as the fat form and red face of Mr. Snaggs appeared, following Mr. Bootles in.

"By gad!" muttered Lord Mornington.

"The game's up!" groaned Townsend, under his breath.

"Mr. Snaggs, will you be good enough to point out the four boys who visited your house this afternoon, if they are here?" came the deep voice of the Head.

Mr. Snaggs' small but keen eyes roved over the ranks of the assembled juniors. He stopped before the Fourth, and pointed out Townsend & Co., with a slight grin.

"Ere they are!" he said.
 "Mornington, Townsend, Topham, Peele, stand out!"

The nutty quartette stood out, pale and dismayed. The game was up now, with a vengeance.

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated Mr. Bootles. "Those boys have been absent since dinner, Dr. Chisholm, and they deceived me—deceived me grossly—with a story of their car having broken down on the moor!"

"Indeed!" said the Head grimly. "Mr. Snaggs, I am very, very much obliged to you! Good-evening, sir! Bring those four boys here, please, Mr. Bootles! Now, what have you to say?"

Townsend & Co. had nothing to say. But Lord Mornington shrugged his shoulders, with a sneer.

"You visited a public-house, made a disturbance there, and gave the names of four of your Form-fellows!" said Dr. Chisholm.

"I—I—" stammered Townsend helplessly.

"We—we—— It was all Mornington's fault!" mumbled Peele. "We—we didn't want to go! He dragged us into it!"

"Is that the truth, Mornington?"

His lordship nodded coolly. Whatever were his faults—and their number was legion—he did not want for coolness and pluck.

"Yes, it is true!" he said, with another shrug of the shoulders. "I was bored to death, and I wanted a little excitement. It was my idea from first to last!"

The Head's brow was thunderous.

"I am glad that you are frank, at least," he said. "But for the fact that you are a new boy, Mornington, I should expel you from the school for this! It is not only your rascally escapade, but your baseness in uttering deliberate falsehoods to place your guilt on other shoulders—that is the worst. You will be flogged before the

whole school to-morrow morning! Your companions will be caned, and will write a thousand lines each!"

"Flogged! I!" exclaimed Lord Mornington. "I will not——"

"Silence! Dismiss!"

The next morning all Rookwood was assembled after prayers to witness the flogging. Lord Mornington did not submit quietly. He struggled and kicked, and a couple of prefects had to go to the assistance of old Mack, who had "hoisted" him. The flogging was all the more severe on that account, and when it was over his lordship was quite subdued.

CHAPTER 48.

Swotting Under Difficulties!

CLINK!
 A pebble rattled on the window of the end study, and Jimmy Silver looked up from his work and started.

Jimmy was alone in the study.

The door was locked. Jimmy Silver was working hard, and it was a half-holiday, and so it was strictly necessary to "sport his oak," for his study-mates looked with a disfavouring eye upon "swotting."

Persuasive voices had addressed Jimmy Silver through the keyhole, urging him to come down to the football-ground. Only the scratch of Jimmy's pen had replied.

The persuasive voices grew very threatening, and kicks and bangs were bestowed on the door; but still Jimmy worked on, unheeding.

Then his friends had retired, baffled, and Jimmy hoped that he would get a few hours in peace and quiet to grind at the Anabasis.

But the hope was delusive.

The clink of the pebble on the window proved that Lovell & Co. had simply changed the locality of the attack.

Clink! Clink!

"Oh, crumbs!" murmured Jimmy.
"The silly asses! Why can't they let
a chap work? Bad enough to have to
work, anyway!"

Clink! Clink!

Crack!

One of the panes went.

Jimmy Silver jumped up and strode
to the window. Under the window
Lovell and Raby and Newcome stood
in the quad, grinning. Jimmy shook
his fist at them, and they smiled back
sweetly.

"Come out!" shouted Lovell.

"Come out, you swot!" said Raby.

"Come out, you slacker!" yelled
Newcome.

"You silly asses!" roared the ex-
asperated Jimmy. "I'm swotting!"

"Rats!"

"Bow-wow!"

"Advice to an industrious young
man—when about to swot, don't!"
grinned Lovell. "Chuck it and come
down to the footer!"

"Look here, the exam comes off next
week!" said the unhappy Jimmy.
"You want me to win the Greek prize,
don't you?"

"Bother the Greek prize! We want
to beat St. Jim's when they come
over!"

"We shall beat St. Jim's, anyway!"

"Not if you swot on half-holidays
and cut the practice! Come out!"

"Come out!" chorused the three.

"Now, do be reasonable!" urged
Jimmy Silver, from the window. "I
don't like swotting, you know that. I
don't like Xenophon. I wish the ten
thousand had retreated to some place
where they'd never be heard of again.
But if I'm going to get the twenty
guineas, I've got to work for it. Think
of the feed we'll have when I bag the
prize!"

"Think of the licking we shall get
if we ain't in form for St. Jim's!"

"Blow St. Jim's!"

"Well, blow the Greek prize, then!
Come out!"

Jimmy Silver snorted. His chums
were unreasonable. It had been
agreed by all the Fistical Four that the
end study ought to bag that big prize.
The Co. agreed that Jimmy Silver was
the chap to do it. It was understood,
too, that the handsomest prize of the
term couldn't be bagged without some
hard work being put in. Jimmy
wasn't specially fond of hard work, and
that bright afternoon he would have
given almost anything to be out of
doors. But he had to grind for the
exam. The honour of the study was at
stake.

That study more than kept its
reputation as a fighting study. It
shone at footer and cricket. In rags
and rows with the Moderns it was in
all its glory. But in scholarship it
had not been brilliant, as the Fourth
Form master had said on more than
one occasion. The Fistical Four had
not cared much for prizes.

It had seemed a good idea to prove
that the end study could bag prizes
if it liked, and twenty guineas was a
stupendous sum, and meant high funds
for the whole study for a long time—
when safely bagged.

Jimmy Silver was anything but a
swot as a rule, but of late he had been
swotting in season and out of season.
He thought, dreamed, and almost spoke
Greek. In dreams he marched ever so
many parasangs with the famous ten
thousand. His chums had grown fed
up with it. On this special afternoon
the Co. considered it really too bad,
and they were determined that Jimmy
Silver should come out.

So, in answer to Jimmy's expostu-
lations from the window, they replied
in chorus:

"Come out! You slacker, come out!
Come down to the footer!"

"Go and eat coke!" roared Jimmy
Silver.

"Come out!"

"I've got to work!"

"Come out!"

"It's twenty guineas!"

"Come out!"

"Think what a time we'll have when we bag the cash!"

"Come out!"

"You silly, frabjous asses!"

"Come out!"

Evidently it was useless to explain, useless to argue, and useless to expostulate. Jimmy Silver slammed the window shut and returned to the study table.

Clink! Clink! Crash!

The cracked pane fairly went now. Fragments of glass were strewn over the study carpet. There was a roar of laughter from below.

Jimmy Silver jumped up again, in a mood of desperation. He made one jump to the study cupboard for a bottle of ink. He made another jump to the window and threw it open.

Three grinning faces were turned up to him.

"Come out! Ha, ha! Come out—Groooooogh!"

Swoooosh! went the ink in a black shower.

It swamped over the three grinning faces, and Lovell and Raby and Newcome were transformed into Kentucky Minstrels in the twinkling of an eye. Wild and suffocated ejaculations rose in chorus.

"Gerrrrrooop!"

"Yurrrrrigh!"

"Wooshi!"

Jimmy Silver slammed the window shut again. With a contented smile he sat down once more to Anabasis, and revelled in parasangs. Below, in the quad, Lovell and Raby and Newcome mopped ink from their faces, and gasped out blood-curdling threats.

CHAPTER 41.

Not Jimmy Silver!

TAP!

The tap at the door elicited a wild howl from Jimmy Silver.

"Go away!" he shrieked.

"I say, Jimmy——"

"Oh, is that you, Rawson?"

"Yes. The door's locked."

It was Rawson of the Classical Fourth at the door. Rawson, the scholarship junior, was also a competitor for the Greek prize. Jimmy Silver was his only serious rival. The examination was confined to juniors. Several Shell fellows had entered, but there was nobody in the Shell of whom either of the Fourth Formers had need to be afraid. They had rivals in the Fourth, but they were well ahead of them. It was generally admitted that it was between Jimmy Silver and Rawson.

"I don't want to interrupt you, if you're working," said Rawson, through the keyhole. "But if you're not using your Liddell and Scott, you might lend it to me."

"But I am," said Jimmy.

"Oh, all right, then! Never mind!"

"What's become of your own?" asked Jimmy.

"Somebody's hidden it," said Rawson. "A rotten joke on me, I suppose. I can't find it anywhere."

"What a rotten trick!" said Jimmy Silver. "Well, I'll whack out my lexicon with you, Rawson. We'll work together if you like."

"If it won't bother you——"

"Oh, that's all right!"

Jimmy Silver jumped up and unlocked the door. Jimmy was good nature itself, and it never occurred to him that a disadvantage to his rival was an advantage to himself.

He unlocked the door, and Rawson came in. The burly Rawson was looking a little pale and tired, though he was generally in the most robust state of health. He had been sweating hard, and, as the Classical juniors remarked, he slept with Greek verbs under his pillows. It was not uncommon for Rawson to be seen sitting up in bed in the early morning, studying hard, while he waited for the rising-bell. Jimmy Silver did not carry sweating quite so far as that.

"Hallo! What are those chaps up

to?" exclaimed Rawson, glancing through the window as he came in.

Jimmy followed his glance.

Three juniors with inky faces were carrying a ladder towards the window. It was old Mack's ladder, evidently commandeered from the woodshed. Lovell and Raby and Newcome were looking as furious as they were inky. It was an attack by escalade upon the end study that was coming.

"The silly bounders!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver, exasperated.

"Swotting under difficulties!" grinned Rawson.

"Yes, bless them!" Jimmy burst into a sudden chuckle. "I'll bring my books into your study, Rawson, and we'll whack out Liddell and Scott there—you can Liddell while I Scott!"

Rawson chuckled.

"You take the books," said Jimmy quickly. "These blessed exercises, too, and the paper, and my pen. I'm going to get something ready for those blessed duffers."

"Right you are!"

Rawson carried off the paraphernalia of the swot. Jimmy Silver opened a box in the corner of the study, and dragged out some of the articles belonging to the Rookwood players. They were an old Eton jacket and trousers. With deft and rapid hands, he stuffed other articles into them, and arranged them on the chair, with the back to the window, sticking a wig on the top.

It was only a few minutes' work, and when Jimmy Silver had finished the figure in the chair looked like a fellow bending over his work, until seen at close quarters.

Having completed that playful arrangement, Jimmy then followed Rawson from the study, changing the key to the outside of the door, and turning it in the lock.

There was a bump outside the window as he went. The ladder had jammed against the sill.

A minute later an inky and wrathful face looked through the window. It was that of Edward Arthur Lovell.

Raby and Newcome were behind him on the ladder, breathing vengeance.

"There he is, the cheeky rotter!" muttered Lovell, peering through the shattered pane. "Now, Jimmy Silver, you rotter, you're going to have it."

There was no reply from the figure at the table.

"Come and open this window, Jimmy Silver."

No reply.

"Well, I'll jolly soon get it open, and you'll be slaughtered," said Lovell. "We'll make you eat your Greek exercises."

Silence.

Lovell snorted, and fumbled with the window. In a minute more it was open, and Lovell put his head in.

"Now, look out, you rotter!" he said.

Lovell was a little surprised that the junior did not even look round. He had expected that Jimmy Silver would resist the invasion.

But the figure at the table never moved.

"Blessed if he isn't gone to sleep over his work!" said Lovell. "We'll soon wake him up."

"Ha, ha! Rather!"

Lovell edged himself in, and dropped lightly into the study. He waited for Raby and Newcome to squeeze in after him.

Then the three of them advanced together.

Lovell bent over the leaning form and roared:

"Wake up, you slacker!"

No answer.

Lovell, with a grunt, seized the Eton jacket by the shoulder and dragged at it, to drag Jimmy Silver over the back of the chair.

He had expected plenty of weight to pull, so he put all his strength into that terrific tug.

Unfortunately for Lovell, there was no weight, or hardly any.

The stuffed jacket flew up in his hands, and Lovell, his tug meeting with no resistance, flew backwards.

He crashed into Raby and hurled him flying.

Raby rolled on the carpet, and Lovell sat down.

Crash! Bump!

"Oh! Oh, my hat! What—what the thunder—" stuttered Lovell.

"Yow-wow-wow!" came from Raby in tones of anguish.

Newcome burst into a yell of laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha! That ain't Jimmy Silver! Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's a—a—a jacket!" stammered Lovell, blinking at his prize. "A—a—an old jacket stuffed, by gum!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yow-ow-ow-wow!"

"The spoofing rotter!" bellowed Lovell. "He's gone!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked Newcome.

"You cackling idiot, there's nothing to cackle at! He's gone!" roared Lovell, scrambling to his feet. "I'll scalp him!"

Lovell rushed to the door and dragged at it furiously. But the door did not open.

"What's the matter with this rotten door? It's jammed or something!"

"Ha, ha! It's locked!"

"Well, if it's locked, that's nothing to cackle at, you silly jabberwock!" hooted Lovell. "Oh, I'll scalp Jimmy Silver! Come on!"

"Yow-ow-wow!"

"What are you yowing and yowing for, Raby, you ass?"

"Yow-ow! I'm hurt! You've banged my head on the fender!" moaned Raby.

"Blow your head! Come on, I tell you!"

Lovell scrambled out of the window again and slithered down the ladder. He rushed round to the door of the School House, followed more slowly by his chums. They ran into the House, and almost ran into Mr. Bootles, the master of the Fourth.

Mr. Bootles halted them with a gesture.

"Lovell! Raby! Newcome! How

dare you appear in public with such shockingly dirty faces!" he exclaimed.

Lovell gasped.

"It isn't dirty, sir. It—it's some ink that—that got spilt—"

"Go and wash your faces at once, you dirty boys!" said Mr. Bootles childishly.

The dirty boys went to wash their faces obediently, but with feelings that could hardly be expressed in the British language.

CHAPTER 42.

The Nuts Are Indignant!

JIMMY SILVER and Tom Rawson worked contentedly in the latter's study. It was an hour before the Co. discovered where Jimmy Silver was, and when they found he was in Rawson's study, they wreaked their wrath by kicks and thumps on the door till Bulkeley's voice from downstairs warned them to desist and scuttle off. Then they gave it up and went to the football field.

Jimmy Silver chuckled when they had departed.

"Now for some quiet and sweating," he remarked. "How are you getting on, Rawson?"

"Pretty fair, I think," said Rawson.

"You're overdoing it," said Jimmy, with a critical glance at Rawson's pale face. "No good doing that, you know. You ought to put in some football and keep yourself fit, or you'll crack up on exam day."

Rawson shook his head.

"All the same, it's a mug's game to overdo it and get stale," said Jimmy Silver. "I'm giving you good advice, like a kind uncle, you know, for if you crack up the prize belongs to me. You're the only chap who could beat me. Howard and Tracy of the Shell haven't an earthly. Old Flynn hasn't much chance, and Oswald is weak—jolly weak—and Topham won't have a bare look-in. And that's the lot."

"Yes, it's between you and me."

"Here's at you, then," grinned Jimmy Silver. "Pass the giddy lexicon, and blow the whole giddy Greek alphabet from Alpha to Omega. I'd rather be playing footer."

And the rivals wired in again, helping one another occasionally in a manner that certainly did not smack of rivalry.

At five o'clock Jimmy Silver rose, stretched his limbs, and yawned portentously. Rawson was grinding on.

"Coming out for a run?" asked Jimmy.

"No; I'm keeping on."

"You'd do better to get some fresh air, old chap," said Jimmy. "You don't want me to beat you next Thursday because you've cracked up."

"I shan't crack up. Thanks, all the same!"

"Well, pile in, then!" said Jimmy. "I'm off!"

The captain of the Fourth left the study, leaving Rawson poring over his books. There was no doubt in Jimmy's mind that Tom was overdoing it, and that a little less swotting might have meant a greater advance for him. Unless he kept himself fit he had little chance of winning through a difficult examination. But that was for Rawson himself to decide.

Jimmy Silver sauntered down the passage, with Greek verbs and Persian parasangs buzzing in his ears, and yawning widely. As he came downstairs he found Townsend and Topham and Peele, the nuts of the Fourth, talking on the middle landing.

Topham, nut and slacker as he was, was a competitor for the twenty guineas, though as he neglected his Greek, and was generally in hot water with his Form-master about it, it was a mystery how he expected to bag the exam.

The three nuts were talking and chuckling on the landing, and they did not observe the captain of the Fourth coming down the stairs. Jimmy's own name was on Topham's lips at that moment.

"That rotter Silver's with him now!"

he said. "The cad's borrowed Silver's books, too, I find. But——"

"Hallo, Toppo! Taking my name in vain?" said Jimmy Silver cheerily. "Who gave you leave to call your Uncle James a rotter?"

Topham spun round in alarm.

"Oh! I—I didn't see you, Silver! I——"

Jimmy Silver interrupted the dandy of the Fourth by taking him by the back of the neck. Topham wriggled in his grasp.

"Let go, you silly ass!" he howled.

"Did you call your Uncle James a rotter?" smiled Jimmy Silver, compressing his grip.

"Yow! Ow! Help me, you fools!" howled Topham.

"Yes, come and help him!" said Jimmy Silver, smiling at Townsend and Peele. "Come to the rescue, like the giddy Paladins you are!"

"Look here, let Toppo go, you silly chump!" said Townsend threateningly.

"Make him!" yelled Topham, struggling.

"Yes, make me, dear boys!" said Jimmy.

Townsend and Peele set their lips, and made a rush simultaneously. Jimmy Silver swung Topham round by the shoulders, the unfortunate dandy of the Fourth being as helpless in his grasp as a sack of coke. There was a roar from Peele and Townsend as Toppo came into violent contact with them, and they were rolled over on the landing.

Jimmy Silver chuckled as the two nuts sprawled over, and rolled Topham over them, and then went on his way downstairs, smiling serenely.

The three juniors sat up, gasping and furious.

"Ow! The rotter!" mumbled Topham, rubbing his neck ruefully. "Yow! Ow! The beast guessed we were getting up something against Rawson, I think!"

"Well, he's gone now," said Peele. "Rawson's alone. Let's go in and see him."

"Good egg!", said Townsend.

The nuts had no desire to pursue Jimmy Silver and take vengeance. Jimmy was too hard a nut to crack. They had been waiting for him to leave Rawson's study, and now he was gone, and the coast was clear.

"The rotter's swottin' in the study," went on Topham. "He's been swottin' all the afternoon. He's keepin' it up, you know. He means to bag that twenty guineas, the poverty stricken cad! A gentleman's got no chance against a cad like that! I'm not goin' to swot!"

"Of course you're not!" said Townsend. "It's not to be thought of. But that worm's not goin' to bag the prize if we can stop him! That prize is yours, Topy, and you're goin' to stand an afternoon at the races in a car if you bag it."

"That's agreed," said Topham.

"Like the filthy outsider's cheek to think of baggin' Topy's prize!" said Peele. "Cheek to be at Rookwood at all, for that matter! Now those beasts are all gone down to the football, we've got a free hand!"

"Better call a chap or two more," said Townsend cautiously. "Rawson's a savage beast when he's roused, and it's beneath our dignity to fight with such a rank outsider. We'll call Mornington and Smythe."

"Good!"

The nuts lost no time. Lord Mornington of the Fourth and Adolphus Smythe of the Shell were keen enough to join in the ragging of the outsider, having once ascertained that the Fistical Four were safe on the football ground. The five "Giddy Goats" proceeded to Rawson's study with far from friendly intentions.

CHAPTER 42.

Ragging Rawson:

RAWSON had laid down his pen. He was tired, and he was feeling the need of fresh air and exercise. But he did not think of leaving his work.

Rawson passed his hand across his forehead, which was burning. He drew an envelope from his pocket, and took out a letter. He unfolded the letter, which was well thumbed, and had evidently been read many times. The letter was in his mother's handwriting:

"Dear Tom.—I can't say how glad I was to get the news you gave me in your letter last week about you having a chance of winning a big prize. Your father is better now, but he hasn't been able to work since his accident. If Dick were at home now we could manage, but goodness knows when we shall see poor Dick again. If something turns up to pay the rent we can pull through, but don't think for a moment, dear Tom, of leaving school for our sakes. You could not earn enough for that if you were in work, and you might not even be able to get a job. If you could win the prize you told me of, that would save our home from the landlord. Do your best, my dear boy, but don't overwork yourself. Take care of your health. Don't worry about us at home.

"Your loving mother,

"ELIZA RAWSON."

Rawson's tired eyes were dim as he read that letter for the tenth or twelfth time. He could read between the lines the wistful anxiety of the poor woman. His father sick and unable to work, young children that required to be fed, but could not contribute to the small income of the family—that was Rawson's home. Unless he won the Greek prize the clutch of a rapacious landlord would close upon it.

Poor Rawson had offered to leave Rookwood, to throw up his scholarship, so hardly won, to go home and work for his parents—a desperate resource which would have ruined his own prospects without affording much help. But if he could only win the Greek prize he could help his people, he could save them, and without throwing up his Rookwood prospects.

If Jimmy Silver could have seen

that letter he would not have wondered that Rawson was working himself to the verge of illness for the sake of the twenty guineas.

That handsome prize was Rawson's lodestar now, or a mirage in the desert, as it might prove. An Old Boy of Rookwood, of the Classical side, had founded that annual prize when the school was first divided into Classical and Modern. It was open only to Classics, as the Modern side did not take Greek, having German instead.

The Classical Old Boy had been desirous of encouraging the old classical studies of his own time, and there was no more effectual way of doing it than by founding a handsome prize for a Greek examination. Rawson blessed the Old Boy a hundred times when he thought of it.

His heart had been heavy sometimes when he heard the Fistical Four discussing what they would do with the prize when won. He wondered sometimes what they would think if they knew how badly he needed it. But that they should never know; the scholarship junior had his pride. He hoped to beat Jimmy Silver, though he had his doubts about it.

Rawson laid the letter on the table and sighed. His head fell on his hands, and he fell into deep and gloomy thought.

The door opened, but he did not hear it. It had been left unlocked when Jimmy Silver went out. Townsend's grinning face looked into the study.

"By gad! Here's the beast swottin'!" said Smythe of the Shell, looking in over Townsend's shoulder.

Rawson started and looked up.

The five juniors came into the study. Peele closed the door. They surveyed Rawson with mocking grins. The palor of his face, the tired look in his eyes, did not touch them in the least.

"We've come here to give you a warnin', Rawson," began Smythe. "This swottin' is goin' too far. You're not

goin' to be allowed to bag Topp's prize!"

"No, by gad!" said Mornington.

"That's the plain English of it," said Townsend. "We're warnin' you off!"

"Oh, go and eat coke!" said Rawson contemptuously.

"Look at his giddy exercises," said Mornington. "Piles of 'em—Greek verbs written out from beginnin' to end, by gad!"

"Let those papers alone!" shouted Rawson, as Mornington began to gather up his exercises. "What are you doing?"

"We're going to burn the whole lot," smiled Mornington. "If you're so fond of Greek exercises, you can write the lot out again!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Rawson came striding round the table, his fists clenched and his eyes blazing. "Put those papers down, Mornington!"

"Pah!"

"Do you want me to handle you, you fool?"

"You'll handle the lot of us!" grinned Smythe. "Dash it all, we're wastin' time! Collar the cad, and make an end of his rubbish!"

The grinning nuts closed in on Rawson from all sides.

Rawson put up his hands at once. He was as hard as nails, and had made his mark in the Fourth as a fighting-man. He was hopelessly outnumbered, and he was not in his usual form, but his courage was undaunted.

The nuts did not handle him very easily.

The great Adolphus was sent flying from a drive full on the chin, and he gasped painfully and collapsed on the floor. Peele joined him there, nursing his nose and yelling.

But Mornington and Townsend and Topham had hold of him then, and he went to the floor, with the three clinging to him.

"Rag the hound!" hissed Mornington. "Pommel him!"

Rawson struggled furiously.

Smythe and Peele scrambled up, savage and furious, and hurled themselves into the fray.

With five fellows scrambling over him, punching and pommelling, Rawson had no chance. Breathless and exhausted, he lay panting on the carpet, with Townsend kneeling on his chest, Smythe standing on his legs, and Mornington holding his head. Topham had caught his wrists, and gripped them together.

"Got the cad!" gasped Smythe.

"Pin him down," said Mornington. "I'll jam his head on the floor if he wriggles any more!"

"Oh, you rotters!" gasped Rawson.

Crack!

Rawson's head came in hard contact with the floor, and he yelled.

"Have some more?" grinned Mornington.

"Oh! Ow!"

"Shove those papers into the grate, and set light to 'em. Peele," said Smythe. "Shove in the books, too. May as well make a clean sweep. If he sneaks to Bootles about it, we'll stand together an' deny the whole yarn!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Rawson struggled ineffectually under the weight of the four juniors, while Peele, grinning, gathered up his papers on the table.

"Hallo! What the dickens is this?" exclaimed Peele, picking up Rawson's letter, which lay on the study table, where the scholarship junior had put it down.

"Put that letter down!" shouted Rawson furiously.

"My hat! It's a letter from the cad's slum," said Peele. "I'll read it out to you fellows!"

"Ha, ha! Go it!"

"Put that letter down, you cad!" shrieked Rawson, struggling frantically. "Don't you dare to read it!"

"Go it, Peele! We've got the cad safe!"

Peele, grinning, read out the letter, which was greeted with howls of laughter by the nuts of Rookwood.

"Well, my hat!" said Smythe, in deep disgust. "A Rookwood chap's people goin' to have the bailiffs in! Rookwood prizes goin' to pay out the broker's-man! By gad, this school is comin' to somethin'! I wonder the cad ain't ashamed to show his face here!"

Rawson groaned. His cup of bitterness was full. He knew that that letter's contents would soon be all over the school. The miserable poverty of his home would become a standing joke among all the fellows who were too thoughtless or ill-natured to understand the tragedy of it.

"I'll tell you what we'll do with this letter," said Peele, chuckling. "We'll stick it up in the Common-room for all the fellows to read!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The proposition was greeted with a howl of laughter.

"Oh, you cad!" panted Rawson.

"I'll go down and do it now," grinned Peele. "You fellows nuck up his rubbish here, and then come down."

"Right-ho, dear boy!"

Peele quitted the study, letter in hand. Rawson made a fierce attempt to throw off his captors; but they held him fast, and pinned him down.

"Not just yet," smiled Smythe. "All Rookwood's goin' to know what a beggarly worm you are, my fine fellow. I should think this would be the finish for you at Rookwood. Bailiffs in, by gad! A Rookwood fellow's people with the bailiffs in for the rent! Oh, gad!"

Townsend, leaving his three precious comrades to hold Rawson, gathered up the exercises which had cost Rawson so many hours of work, and jammed them into the grate. He set a match to the sheets, and they were soon flaring away. Rawson's Greek grammar and Jimmy Silver's big lexicon followed, and all the other books that were on the table.

There was soon a roaring fire. Rawson, incapable of resistance, watched the scene with dumb misery.

"Now you can let the cad go," said Townsend. "He can have the study to

himself. I'm not goin' to feed here with that outsider. We'll lock him in and leave him!"

"Good egg!"

As it was pretty evident that Rawson would begin to hit out as soon as he was released, Smythe jerked off his victim's necktie, and coolly tied his hands together with it.

Then the nuts retreated from the study, laughing loudly, leaving Rawson to struggle to free his hands. Smythe changed the key to the outside of the lock.

"Ta-ta, dear boy!" he said. "You'd really better think twice about tryin' to bag Toppo's prize. I really think it would be better for you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Adolphus locked the door on the outside, and the nuts departed in great glee.

CHAPTER 41.

Jimmy Silver Takes a Hand!

JIMMY SILVER & CO. came in from the football ground as the dusk was falling. Peace was restored among the Fistical Four. The Co. had magnanimously forgiven the incident of the ink, especially as Jimmy had shown himself at the top of his form at footer.

A sound of loud laughter in the junior Common-room drew the chums of the Fourth in that direction.

"Hallo! What's the little joke?" asked Jimmy Silver, looking in.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Baillifs, by gad!"

"Nice for Rookwood! The cad ought to be kicked out!"

"What on earth's up?" asked Lovell, puzzled.

"Somethin' rather interestin'," drawled Adolphus Smythe. "There's a document on the wall here concernin' a friend of yours. Read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest, dear boys."

The Fistical Four, much perplexed, made their way through the crowd. There were a dozen fellows present.

Some of them looked disapproving, but the majority were members of Adolphus Smythe's select set, and they were laughing and jeering.

Jimmy Silver read the letter that was pinned on the wall. He did not understand at first, taking it for some joke of the nuts.

It was not till he came to the signature, "Eliza Rawson," at the end, that he realised that it was a genuine letter from Rawson's mother.

A blaze came into the eyes of the captain of the Fourth as that understanding dawned upon him at last. He turned round to the grinning nuts.

"Do you mean to say that you've taken a private letter of Rawson's, and made it public in this way?" he demanded angrily.

"We don't mean to say anythin'." yawned Adolphus.

Jimmy Silver reached up and unpinned the letter.

"Let that letter alone," shouted Howard of the Shell, starting forward.

Jimmy shoved him angrily back.

He strode out of the Common-room with the letter in his hand, and none of the nuts ventured to make an attempt to take it from him. Lovell & Co. followed him.

Jimmy Silver went straight to Rawson's study. He found the key on the outside of the door, and unlocked it.

Rawson was seated there, his whole look and attitude indicating the deepest dejection. He had freed his hands, but he had been unable to leave the study. He looked up in gloomy silence as Jimmy came in. It looked as if Rawson's spirit had sunk at last under the persecution.

"That letter yours?" asked Jimmy.

"Yes."

"Did those cads fake it from you?"

"Yes."

"I—I'm sorry I read it," said Jimmy.

"It was pinned up in the Common-room, and I didn't understand what it was till I'd read it. I'm sorry."

"It doesn't matter," said Rawson.

heavily. "It'll be all over the school, anyway, now."

"Excuse me, things are pretty bad at home, it seems, according to that letter," said Jimmy hesitatingly. "That's why you've been grinding so hard for the exam?"

Rawson nodded.

"And those cads have been ragging here," said Jimmy. "What's all that muck in the grate?"

"All my work," said Rawson bitterly. "And my books, and some of yours, too. You left them here, you know. I couldn't stop them. They were holding me, five of them."

Jimmy Silver's eyes glittered.

"They'll make all that good," he said.

"They won't. They seem to think I've no right to enter for the prize at all, as Topham's entered," said Rawson wearily. "I'm about fed up. I wish I'd never come to Rookwood."

"Oh, buck up, you know," said Lovell.

"Cheer-o!" said Jimmy Silver. "Keep smiling. You're feeling run down from too much swotting, or you wouldn't feel like that. This is going to be set right. They're going to replace the books, and they're going to smart for the ragging, and they're going to learn not to repeat it. There were five of them, you say. Give me their names."

Jimmy Silver made a note of the names.

"Smythe, Mornington, Townsend, Topham, Peele," he said. "Good! We're going to interview them. You can leave it to us, Rawson. Now give me a list of the books destroyed."

Rawson smiled faintly, and made out the list. Jimmy Silver put it in his pocket.

"Come on, you chaps!" he said.

"Whither bound, O king?" asked Newcome.

"On the warpath, of course. If you feel inclined for a scrap, Rawson, you can come, too. If you don't, you can leave it to us."

"I'll come," said Rawson.

"Then follow your Uncle James!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. returned to the Common-room.

CHAPTER 45.

The Nuts and the Nut-Crackers!

TOWNSEND & Co. were in the Common-room, still chuckling over that extremely good joke of pinning up Rawson's letter for the general amusement.

Townsend & Co. were in high feather.

They felt that, after the ragging the scholarship fellow had received, he would think twice before going on with his swotting for Topsy's prize. If he didn't, the dose could be repeated ad lib. Anyway, the destruction of his papers was a set-back to him. So everything in the garden, so to speak, was lovely, from the point of view of the nuts, till Jimmy Silver & Co. came in. The looks of the five juniors boded trouble, especially when Jimmy Silver closed the door and locked it.

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"We've got a bone to pick with you," said Jimmy, coming to the point directly. "You've been ragging Rawson, five to one——"

"No business of yours," said Mornington.

"I'm making it my business," said Jimmy calmly. "As captain of the Fourth, and as your kind Uncle James, I cannot allow such proceedings."

"Oh, cheese it!" said Smythe.

"You've ragged Rawson, five to one. Now we're going to rag you, one to one," said Jimmy Silver. "The rest of the fellows will see fair play."

"Faith, and we will!" grinned Flynn. "Pile in, ye cripples!"

And the avengers piled in without further delay. Jimmy Silver opened the ball by rushing upon Adolphus Smythe, who dodged wildly round the table, amid yells of laughter. Hooker obligingly put out his toe for Adolphus, and the dandy of the Shell stumbled over it and sprawled. The next moment he was in the grasp of Jimmy Silver, and his head was in chancery.

Lovell collared Topham, much to Topham's dismay, and they rocked about in a tight embrace, Topham getting most of the punishment. Raby dealt with Townsend, declining to listen to his frantic statements that he had had enough. Newcome cornered Mornington, who put up a savage fight, but was soon knocked into a cocked hat by the warlike Newcome. Rawson advanced upon Peele, who backed away till the wall prevented him from backing further, and then put up his hands.

The junior Common-room at Rookwood had often witnessed wild and whirling scenes. But five fights in progress at once was rather a novelty. ■

A crowd of fellows looked on, laughing, and cheering the combatants. Patrick O'Donovan Flynn, in his enthusiasm, urged Howard and Tracy to go to the rescue of their nutty comrades, promising to deal with both of them himself if they did. But they didn't. Selwyn and Chesney likewise re-

fused pressing invitations from Dick Oswald. Smythe & Co. had no help to expect from their select friends of the Giddy Goats Society.

It was a wild rough-and-tumble fight, distinguished mainly by wild yells from the nuts and their frantic endeavours to get away.

Adolphus Smythe flung himself at last on the floor, and refused to rise for any consideration whatever. His comrades speedily followed his example, with the exception of Mornington. But Mornington was down, with Newcome sitting on his chest. Mornington scratched and kicked, proceedings which Newcome promptly punished by banging his noble head on the floor, to an accompaniment of terrific yells from his lordship.

"I give you best!" shrieked Adolphus. "Lemme alone! Yarooch!"

"Well, they look rather licked," said Jimmy Silver, surveying the field of battle. "But this isn't only a licking. It's a ragging! They've got to have a lesson about going for a chap five to one, and burning his books and papers."

"Yow! Ow! Help!" howled Peele.

"Oh, by gad! Wow!"

"Raby, scrape some soot out of the chimney, will you?"

"What-ho!"

"Lovell, get all the ink there is in the room."

"You bet!"

"Newcome, I want all the ashes you can find in the grate."

"To hear is to obey!" grinned Newcome.

Up jumped the five nuts, making a frantic rush for the door. But Jimmy Silver and Rawson were in the way, with their fists up. They hit out right and left, and the unfortunate nuts retreated, yelling.

"You've got to have your medicine," said Jimmy Silver coolly. "You're not going to try your dodge of mucking up Rawson's chance for the prize again. You're going to have something you'll remember."

"Oh, by gad! Ow!"

"Floor the rotters, and shove their heads over the fender!" said Jimmy Silver.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Promptly Smythe & Co. were collared and yanked to the fender, resisting furiously. But their resistance did not avail them. They were held down forcibly, with their heads in the fender, and over their heads were duly swamped the soot, the ink, and the ashes. Jimmy Silver stirred that dreadful mixture well in with the shovel, raising a few bumps on the unfortunate heads in the process. But that could not be helped.

The wriggling, howling nuts were released at last, looking decidedly the worse for wear.

Yells of laughter greeted them on all sides as they scrambled up, as black as Kentucky Minstrels, and gasping for breath.

"Oh, you rotters!" groaned Adolphus. "You've spoiled my clothes! Ow, ow! Yow!"

"I'll go to the Head about this!" yelled Mornington.

"Do. And tell him how you ragged Rawson's study," said Jimmy Silver coolly. "You can't afford to sneak, dear boy."

"Hang you!"

"There's the list of books you destroyed, Smythe."

"Hang you!" hissed Smythe.

"Every book on that list has got to be replaced," said Jimmy Silver. "We give you until nine o'clock to bring them to the end study. If they're not brought by that time we'll come round and visit you, and what you've had now will be a joke to what you'll get then. Now you can clear off, you dirty cads! Kick 'em out!"

"Yaroooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The five unhappy nuts were kicked out of the Common-room, and they fled.

"I fancy," said Jimmy Silver thoughtfully, "that you won't be ragged any more after this, Rawson."

Rawson laughed.

"I fancy not," he agreed.

Promptly at nine o'clock Adolphus Smythe, with suppressed fury in his sullen face, appeared in the end study with a bundle of books. The nuts had made up the list to the last item, lest worse should befall them.

"Thanks awfully, Smythe!" said Jimmy Silver amiably. "That's really nice of you. You're really a most obliging chap, Smythe."

Adolphus did not reply; his feelings were too deep. He stalked away down the passage without a word, leaving the Fistical Four smiling.

CHAPTER 46.

Jimmy's Sacrifice!

"YOU chaps have got a lot of sense." Thus Jimmy Silver the next day after lessons.

Lovell and Raby and Newcome ought to have looked flattered and pleased at this unexpected tribute from their leader, instead of which they looked surprised. And Lovell remarked:

"What are you driving at, fathead?"

"You've got a lot of sense," repeated Jimmy Silver, with conviction. "I admit that a fellow wouldn't think so to look at you——"

"Why, you cheeky ass!"

"But there it is, all the same. You've got a lot of sense, and your Uncle Jimmy gives in. I'm not going to swot to-day. Let's get down to the footer."

"Well, that's sensible," said Lovell. "You might have said that yesterday afternoon, instead of swamping your old pals with ink."

"Yesterday afternoon isn't this afternoon," said Jimmy Silver oracularly. "Tempora mutantur——"

"Oh, don't! We get enough of that in class."

"Times change," said Jimmy Silver. "My idea is that I ought to go in for

some really hard training the next few days, and get into ripping form, ready for the St. Jim's match. What do you think?"

"Hurrah!"

And the Pistical Four went down to football.

Rawson went to his study to swot, without fear now of interruption from the nuts of Rockwood. Smythe and Townsend & Co. had learned their lesson.

Jimmy Silver was in great spirits on Little Side and in great form, and his chums were delighted.

The next day, out of lessons hours, again Jimmy Silver seemed to think of nothing but football. It was the same on Saturday.

On Monday, Lovell & Co. expected to see Jimmy Silver really wiring into the Greek. After tea, they decided to go for a walk, and leave him the study to himself.

Jimmy Silver rose at once.

"You're not coming, are you?" asked Lovell.

"Why not?"

"Ain't you going to swot?"

"No fear!"

"Now, look here, Jimmy Silver, you'll have to work if you're going to bag that prize for this study," said Lovell warmly.

"I'm going to take your advice, Lovell——"

"My advice is to swot."

"I mean your last week's advice. I'm coming out."

"Look here, you slacker——"

"Don't be unreasonable!" urged Jimmy Silver. "Last Wednesday you called me a slacker for sticking indoors with the Greek."

"Well, there's a limit," said Lovell. "We've arranged to stand a big dormitory feed out of that prize."

"I'm waiting for you," said Jimmy Silver politely.

"Br-r-r!" said Lovell.

On Tuesday football reigned supreme in Jimmy Silver's thoughts. He declined to swot for any consideration whatever.

The Co. had been decidedly pleased, at first, with Jimmy Silver's amiable falling in with their views. But they were getting uneasy now. At this rate, Jimmy Silver certainly would never bag the twenty guineas. It was close on the exam, and he never touched a Greek book if he could help it. There was, as Lovell said, a limit—the end study had counted on those guineas.

But Jimmy Silver was obstinate.

Football was the order of the day. And on Wednesday there was a match to be played with Bagshot, and Jimmy could not be spared from the eleven. It was the last chance of swotting, and it was gone. Jimmy was at the top of his form as a footballer, and he helped to beat Bagshot by a handsome margin. But the Co. couldn't help thinking about the morrow's examination.

"Blessed if it doesn't look as if you want to lose the blessed thing, Jimmy!" Lovell said peevishly, in the study that evening.

Jimmy Silver smiled.

"After all, it would be rather a good thing for poor old Rawson to get it," said Lovell thoughtfully. "According to that letter that was stuck up in the Common-room, his people are badly wanting the cash."

"Yes, that's so," said Jimmy. "I shall take that as a consolation if I get licked in the exam."

"Looks to me as if you will get licked, anyway," said Raby. "You're the only chap who could beat Rawson, and you're simply chucking it up, the way you're going on."

Arthur Edward Lovell gave a sudden start, as a new idea came into his mind. He fixed his eyes on Jimmy Silver.

"You frabjous ass!" he said deliberately.

"Hallo! What's biting you now?" demanded Jimmy.

"You silly duffer!"

"What the dickens——"

"Br-r-r-r!" said Lovell.

And the subject dropped.

The next day came the famous exam. The candidates went into the library in the morning, while the rest of the school was at lessons. The papers were set for them there, Jimmy Silver, Tom Rawson, Topham, Howard, Tracy, Flynn, Oswald, and one or two more competing.

Morning lessons were over before the exam finished. Lovell & Co. waited for their leader to come out. Jimmy Silver was released at last, and he joined his chums, smiling.

"Well, how has it gone?" asked Raby.

"Better ask Bootles," smiled Jimmy Silver. "He's got the papers. Result announced on Friday."

"Do you think you've had any luck, fathead?"

"You never can tell, you know. Let's get out."

A good many fellows waited anxiously for the announcement that was to be made on Friday. A list was to be posted on the board, the names going according to the number of marks; and the fellow who headed the list, of course, bagged the twenty guineas.

After lessons on Friday quite an army gathered to see Mr. Bootles pin up the list on the board. The Form-master came out of his study, apparently oblivious to the eagerness round him. The paper went up, and all eyes were glued on it.

Then there was a shout:

"Rawson!"

"Tom Rawson!"

"Rawson's top!"

"By gad!"

"Oswald second," said Lovell. "Flynn next—Topham—why, you're right at the bottom of the list, Jimmy!"

"By Jove, am I?" said Jimmy.

"Yes, you ass!"

"Booby prize for Silver," grinned Townsend, and there was a laugh.

"I am surprised at your failure, Silver," said Mr. Bootles, in his solemn way. "You have somewhat disappointed me by taking so very few marks. I fear, Silver, that you have neglected your studies for—ahem!—football of late."

"I fear so, sir," said Jimmy meekly.

"Rawson! Where's Rawson?"

"Rawson! You've got it, Rawson!"

Tom Rawson, his heart beating hard, between hope and fear, was hanging back behind the crowd, his face pale and worn. But the shouts which announced his success brightened him up wonderfully. Jimmy Silver dragged him forward.

"Feast your eyes on it, Rawson!"

"I congratulate you, Rawson!" said Mr. Bootles. "Your paper was—er—excellent—excellent!"

"Thank you, sir," faltered Rawson. His heart was almost too full for words.

"Three cheers for Rawson!" shouted Jimmy Silver.

And the Rookwood juniors gave them with a will.

That day Rawson of the Fourth wrote cheering news to his home. In the end study, the Co. took Jimmy Silver severely to task.

"I did my best," said Jimmy; "I did, really! But, you see, I've hardly looked at Greek for a week, and so my best wasn't very good. There you are!"

"Yes, there you are, you fathead," said Lovell. "And I know now why you hardly looked at Greek for a week, you dummy. You're a silly ass, and a duffer, and a frabjous dummy, and a burbling jabberwock, and—a brick!"

Jimmy Silver grinned. The Co. understood at last; but Rawson never had the least suspicion of Jimmy Silver's sacrifice.

CANNY CANINES

"THE little beggar can do everything but talk!" How many dog-owners haven't said something like that when their pet has pulled off a clever new trick—or maybe just sat looking up at his lord and master, head on one side, tail thumping the floor, and that perky, knowing look in his eye?

We're all convinced, of course, that there are mighty few dogs in the world who can give ours any points when it comes to intelligence, quickness on the uptake and canine "hoss-sense" generally. It's only when we see one of those amazing dog turns at a circus or variety show that we realise how much a dog can be taught by a specialist at the job.

Some people have the gift of being able to win an animal's trust and friendship on sight; with them, it seems, a dog can be trained literally to do everything—including talk!

Dog Plays the Piano!

As an example of four-legged sagacity, what could beat Lady, the fox-terrier with half a dozen feature roles in British films to her credit? The list of tricks which Professor Makaroff, her owner, has taught her would fill this page. She can play the piano, though never without the music in front of her; this she turns over with her mouth. Waltzing on her hind legs is child's play to Lady, and she makes no fuss about fetching a handkerchief or a box of matches from any part of the house.

She can even talk in a peculiar series of gruff rumblings of her own, sing a note in perfect tone with one struck on the piano, and cough, sneeze and laugh to order. Perhaps her best achievement, however, is her uncanny

way of finding her master, whatever part of London he may happen to be in.

The Fire-Fighting Dog!

In the same rank with Lady for almost human intelligence is Jack, a three-year-old Dalmatian, of New York. Jack's speciality is fire-fighting. In fact, he's so smart at it that he's been made a member of the city's Uniform Firemen's Association, with the rank of "able fire-fighter." He's no looker-on, either, when his pals are called out; the job is keeping him out of danger, for he's always among the first into the burning buildings. He can drag a hose and climb a ladder; knows the different alarm signals, and fetches the firemen's meals for them when they are busy at a fire.

Without an atom of fear under his tough hide, Jack has risked his life many times among flames, smoke and crashing walls.

For the Sake of a Pal.

Stories of human lives being saved through the loyalty and intelligence of dogs are many. Here is one to show that a dog will make just as great an effort to save a four-legged pal.

Karl, a German sheepdog, and Angus, an Airedale, were racing across the street one night when a car, after narrowly missing Karl, ran over Angus, crushing his hind legs. The motorist drove on.

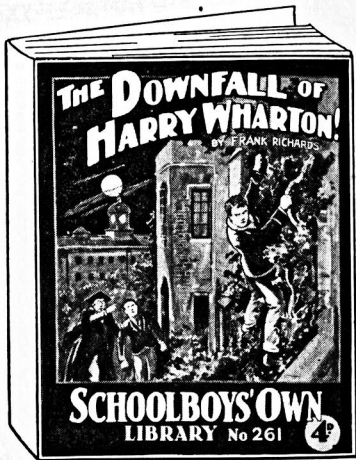
Howling with pain, the Airedale lay in the middle of the street. Karl turned back, seized his companion by the neck and dragged him to a pile of leaves by the kerb. Then he tore off and brought a policeman to the spot by barking and tugging at his trousers. But the policeman, seeing at once that Angus could not recover, mercifully shot him.

Karl had to be held back while the body was carried away, and the last seen of the sheepdog was a forlorn animal waiting on the street corner for a pal who would never return.

HERE'S ANOTHER GREAT YARN TO READ!

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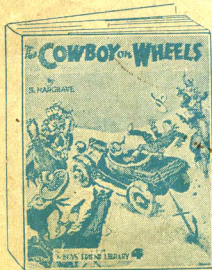


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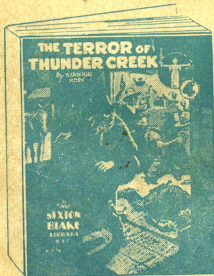
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